

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The role of a principal in an academically successful farm  
school: A case study

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by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study looks at the various actions by the principal of a farm school in running an academically successful school. The study exposes the difficulties faced by farm schools and looks at how the principal confronts these difficulties and turn some of these into success stories. In trying to understand the role of the principal this study uses school effectiveness literature as a source and reference in an attempt to understand the actions adopted by the principal to make this farm school successful.

The study uses the interpretive orientation as the methodology for investigating the principal's role. This is in line with my attempt at explaining the perceptions, views and experiences of the people who are working closely with the principal. I have done this by employing semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The information gathered from the respondents helped in the development of the role of the principal which in this case, is the expressed views of the respondents. The investigation is conducted as a case study and the handling of the information provided by the respondents is in line with case study methods.

The study has revealed that actions of the leader have an influence on the organizational success. The way in which the leader of Rocklands farm School conducts herself and the vision she shares with the people within the organization go a long way towards the improvement of organizational structures and their functioning. In this case the principal has been noted as particularly transformational, charismatic, instructional and transactional in her approaches to school administration and that her dedication to the cause of learners from disadvantaged background is reflected in her sacrificial actions. The study has also found that the principal is considered to be fairly autocratic in her leadership, which is a departure from current leadership thinking. The study has also shown that socio-economic disadvantages do not necessarily inhibit the school from performing beyond expectation. With good guidance from the leader and trust among staff members the farm school has been able to overcome some socio-economic pressures to emerge successful in the academic field.

The fact that the principal of this school is a woman has not changed the overall findings that leadership qualities for successful schooling are universal and do not necessarily depend on the gender of the leader.

This study suggests that leaders have a potential to turn poor situations in schools around and that leaders should as a matter of course ensure that they understand the organizational dynamics within their schools. They should be in the forefront as agents of change being mindful that those within the school understand and share the vision the leader has. The study also suggests that the human element in the educational processes in schools is of critical importance than the conditions in which schools find themselves.

## **DEDICATION & THANKS**

This work is dedicated to the following:

To my late mother Marjorie-Anne Khatshiwe Nongauza who passed away in August of 1993.

To my late Aunt Nomaqheya and my grand mother Nojaji Nongauza who brought me up to be appreciative of life and to respect others.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This research is intended to identify the role the principal plays in running a successful farm school. The focus is on the principal who uses part of or combinations of styles and models to run an effective school. Literature has identified farm schools as areas of neglect, (Nasson in Unterhalter 1991, Gaganakis & Crew 1987, Hartshorne 1992,) where good results are not likely. The outstanding performance by grade 12 learners at Rocklands Farm School has attracted my attention. Dismal environmental factors suggest that nothing of value can be expected from farm school education.

It is my belief that there must be something that this particular farm school is doing well that has defied poor expectations. I decided to look at the leader and learn from the leadership styles to see if these have had any impact on the overall good performance of the school. I do not, through this research, assume that the leader has brought about good performance but I am examining the role of leadership to see if it had had any significant influence on the good results.

The research depends largely on the stories the principal and members of the school community tell. Members of the school community include all those who are directly linked to the school and its daily functioning such as Governing Council members, teachers, learners and management team members.

### **1.2 CONTEXT OF RESEARCH**

As referred to in the introduction, the research is located within a farm school environment where literature on farm school education is not exhaustive. The news of the extraordinary performance of a little known farm school in papers like Daily Dispatch (2000), Eastern Province Herald 1998, 1999, 2000 and Evening Post newspapers in (1999) and (2000) not only took many by surprise but also deepened my interest in this

school. I wanted to see how this school survives; how it fends for itself; how it makes sense of its environment and how it engages with it to emerge as a performing school.

Christie's work (2001) on schools that have succeeded against the odds helped me to look at this farm school as it set the stage for a possible interesting study. Her study presents an important challenge for me to delve into the farm school situation. The information Christie gathered, the suggestions put forward and findings she issued have guided me in my attempt to look for some answers in Rocklands Farm School's outstanding performance.

For Four consecutive years, 1998-2001, Rocklands farm school produced 100% pass for its grade 12 learners. As a result the Department of Education put the school in the top league of high performing schools. To show appreciation of the school's extraordinary performance the Department, through its political head, Mr. Stone Sizani, paid a courtesy call to the school in 2000 to award it with an honours certificate in recognition of outstanding performance by the grade 12 learners. The awarding of a certificate of honour to the school was followed by other community organizations' recognition gestures because they also wanted to express their appreciation of the school's effort as well as its wonderful dedication to teaching and learning.

### **1.3 THE HISTORY OF FARM SCHOOLS**

Farm schools are part of South African history and they came to prominence during the apartheid era particularly after 1948 when the Nationalist Government came to power. Hartshorne (1992: 111) paints a picture of farm schools when he looks at the socio-political background in the South Africa's apartheid period. The dilemma of education in relation to social, economic and political structures is nowhere more evident than in rural areas of the less developed section of South Africa. The farm schools, argues Hartshorne, have systematically been neglected over the years. He even goes to say that the idea of homeland politics was to ensure that the Government of the day was concerned with issues affecting white South Africans while homeland leaders would be busy with day-to-day issues in their respective areas. Farm schools also fell into the forgotten category

because the problem was left in the hands of farm managers to sort out. The apartheid regime was interested in the labour provided by the farm workers and had, instead to ensure that labour was stabilized through restrictive legislations.

Adam & Giliomee (1979: 27) see the 1913 Land Act as part of the earlier stages of farm redistribution. It was an attempt, they argue, by the then Government to entrench oligarchy for political and economic reasons. This was also intended to ensure that Black economic empowerment and political aspirations were diverted away from the common South Africa. These developments had a serious impact on farms and farm schools in particular. At that time farm schools for Blacks and mostly Coloured communities fell under various church organizations and they were known as mission schools operating under different agreements with the farm owners. All the costs of running the schools were borne by different churches. The churches were motivated by philanthropic and evangelical zeal to help those who were desperately in need. The mission farm schools then did not look any better than the present farm school conditions. At that time churches were operating with limited financial resources and as such, they could not make any remarkable difference to the physical appearance of these schools.

Mission schools operated because the farm manager had agreed to make land available for farm labourers' children to have a place to be taught. Other than that there was nothing else that linked the farm owner to the school's activities.

### **1.3.1 THE APARTHEID PERIOD**

After the Nationalist Government had won the election in 1948 it embarked on the policy of separating races to ensure that the interests of white community was preserved by all means possible. It therefore needed legislative frameworks in all socio-economic fronts to see to the attainment of its ideals. The Eiselen Commission of 1949-1951 was established to look into the issues affecting education and it was through the Commission's work and its recommendations that the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was passed by parliament.

It became clear even before the passing of the legislation that farm schools' manner of management did not augur well with the Nationalist Government and they made sure through legislation that governance of farm schools would be removed from missionary hands. The Bantu Education Act put the management of farm schools under the care of the white farm managers who, in most cases were the farm owners. The farm school manager had to swear allegiance to the provisions of the Act and carry out its policy as far as farm schools were concerned. This did not pose any problems because the majority of farmers were supporters of the Government policy. Christie and Gaganakis as quoted in Hartshorne (1992) argue that by the scheme of things in the apartheid arrangements South African farmers were an important element of the Afrikaner National coalition. Graaf as quoted in Unterhalter (1991: 230) continues to explain:

This privileged position allowed them (Afrikaner National Coalition) to create a legislative environment which ensured an extremely cheap and immobile labour force. This produced an almost feudal set of social relations in which workers were tied in to an extremely oppressive and exploitative situation.

Farm schools, according to Graaf were an extension of farm owners' control of their workers. When the De Lange Report was presented in 1982 it did not alter the position of farm school control. Farm school children were bound to farms in which their parents worked. Most farm schools hardly went beyond standard four. This ensured that farm school children would be unable to improve their situation or compete in an open market for jobs.

By 1979 when the Education and Training Act No. 90 was passed there were no tangible or observable changes to the farm school scenario. The main fundamentals of controls were still in the hands of the farmers. A Draft Report on Farm Schools (1995) by the Ministry of Education of the Eastern Cape observed that even after the passing of Education and Training Act farm owners were to be owners of the farm schools and at the same time act as governing bodies of schools within their properties. The parents did not have any meaningful voice because they could not "...make any decisions that will impose financial burden or contractual liability on the farmer..." (Draft Report on Farm Schools 1995: 3). The new Education and Training Act did not attempt to improve the farm school situation in any meaningful way.

The general provisioning of material resources for farm schools was only on paper and many issues like buildings, toilets, furniture and transport of farm school children remained largely neglected. The Act served to entrench the power of the farm owner over the farm labourers. This meant that the farm manager had comprehensive control over the farm schools and their operations within his/her property (Christie & Gaganakis quoted in Unterhalter 1991: 233).

In 1986 the then Department of Education and Training produced The Provision of Education for Black pupils in Rural Areas Report. The report looked at the farm school situation. Though by now the control of farm school education was under the State the reality was that the farm owner had the delegated powers and so the position remained as before. The 1986 report, according to Hartshorne (1992: 136) revealed once more that farm schools "...were a badly neglected sector of the school system, the Cinderella of a system which in total has suffered from neglect and discrimination."

### **1.3.2 1994 AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT**

When the new democratic government came to power in 1994 there were many problems it faced, some of which were educational challenges in the rural and farm schools. The legacy of apartheid made the task of equity and equality of educational opportunities a very difficult proposition to meet. The government needed a legislative framework to change the education scenario in South Africa. In 1996 South African Schools Act (SASA) was passed and it tried to bring farm schools in line with the rest of all other schools. Graaf in Hartshorne (1992: 140) had observed earlier before the passing of (SASA) that the issue of land ownership had not been clearly defined. He went on to note that the major problem of rural education resided not in the individual farmer but in the unwillingness and incapacity of the State to assume full responsibility for farm schools.

It is significant to note that the present government is willing to change the situation of farm schools but financial resources seem to be the restraining factor. The transformation process has yet to make any significant impact on farm school education.

## **1.4 ROCKLANDS FARM SCHOOL AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS**

Rocklands, like any other farm school has been affected by the disadvantages highlighted so far. The expectation is that such a school would not produce good results. I have indicated earlier that the school did not only have good results but it became one of the top performers under the Easter Cape Education Department. It appeared that the school fell into the category of effective schools. Literature on school effectiveness can be traced from the time of Coleman's Report (1966) supported to a great extent by Jencks, Smith, Acland, Bane, Cohen, Gintis, Heyns and Michelson (1972). At that stage the home environment was argued to be the biggest factor in influencing children's progress in schools. The schools therefore were regarded as not very useful to the future of children's education if they were unable to accommodate the conditions of lower, poor or working class children. It was for that reason that a radical call was made by such authors as Ivan Illich for a deschooling policy because schools were regarded by the deschoolers as ineffective (Hayden & Thompson 2000: 157).

In describing school effectiveness I wish to go along with Cohn and Rossmiller's definition of school effectiveness. They argue that school effectiveness should be understood "... in terms of gains in cognitive knowledge rather than the broader, more inclusive measures of the outcomes of schooling (Cohn & Rossmiller 1987: 381). It is true also that the grade 12 learners at Rocklands have been regarded as the measure of success for the whole school and have given people who evaluate performances pointers towards school effectiveness.

My study at Rocklands Farm School takes into account the resilience literature to which I have referred earlier. I look at those elements that are relevant in an effective school though there is no consensus among authors as to the best strategy to determine school effectiveness. Sammons, Thomas, Mortimore, Owen and Pennel (1997) maintain a cogent review and analysis of school effectiveness in which they identify eleven factors leading to effective schools. These factors form part of issues I examine in Rocklands in my attempt to see the role of the leader. The eleven factors are:

- Professional leadership
- Shared vision and goals
- a learning environment
- concentration on teaching and learning
- purposeful teaching
- high expectations
- positive reinforcement
- monitoring progress
- pupil rights and responsibility
- home school partnership
- a learning organization.

I examine these factors to determine applications and meanings as these give a glimpse of what it means for school practice. These factors have assisted and enabled me as a researcher to judge the degree to which they point to farm school effectiveness (Hayden & Thompson 2000: 3).

## **1.5 MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH**

Studies on the role of leadership have been conducted before. Sometimes these studies have been linked to school effectiveness. I have shown earlier that leaders have been found to be key actors in school effectiveness, Sammons *et al.* (1994), Scheerens & Bosker (1997), Christie (2001), Doyle & Wells (1997). The study is located in a farm school. There is not much research work on farm school education and particularly good performing farm schools.

The general indication from farm school literature is that farm schools are places of neglect. Gordon (1997: 7) believes that the situation is to stay unchanged for the foreseeable future because of inadequate financial resources for the Provincial Governments. The belief from some authors that schools can make the difference despite the conditions in which they operate calls for a closer look. This resonates well with the Rocklands Farm School because it is able to produce good results in spite of all the socio-economic conditions that I have highlighted.

Rocklands farm school is located within the broader Eastern Cape Province and is affected by the poor conditions prevalent in farm schools and is also affected by the general depressed conditions that affect the whole Eastern Cape. Farm schools according to Hartshorne (1992: 136), are normally facing, *inter alia*, the following problems;

- Transport problems
- Poorly qualified teachers
- Narrow curricular activities
- Poverty
- Poor building structures
- Poor or lack of financial support
- Multi-standard teaching
- Ineffective and disruptive farm managers

The Rocklands farm school faces similar problems but it is curious that it could beat these problems and deliver good results. Schools that are well equipped and enjoying wonderful support from stakeholders could hardly match this lowly and little known farm school. This tells me that there is something happening at this farm school. I am convinced that Rutter quoted in Doyle & Wells (1997: 145) is making an important statement when he declares that schools do make a difference despite variables in race, social class or home environment. Rutter's view contrasts with long held idea that schools are ineffective for poor or lower class learners.

I have chosen to study school success by looking at the role of the leader. I do this by interviewing the principal and some key members of the school community. In line with the research question these purposely selected people narrate the story of the school and the principal. They express their perceptions and experiences as members of the school. It is this information that speaks to me and I attempt to convey these messages as they begin to delineate the role of the leader.

The purpose is to determine whether the principal of Rocklands has had any meaningful impact on the school's progress. It is also my intention to find out the extent to which the principal has played a role as a leader. This investigation is intended to assist in confirming or putting under question the centrality of leadership role in an effective school. Support for the importance of the leader in effective school is found in Purkey & Smith 1983, Edmond 1979, Cohn & Rossmiller 1987.

This is a case study, which I found appropriate for the kind of investigation I am undertaking. In seeking opinions, experiences and relationships within the Rocklands Farm School I have found it appropriate to use a case study approach because it would be helpful in allowing me to retain the holistic characteristics of the real life events (Yin 1994: 3).

I have been a participant observer at this school for the six months. I got involved in the daily running of the school with the view to learn the culture and the language of the school as well as to understand the environment within which the whole school operates. As I hoped, this instrument has assisted in illuminating the investigation and also helped in bringing to light those actions or ideas that might have been lost (Jorgensen 1989: 14). The investigation lends itself to the ethnographic practice as it seeks to interpret what is happening and what meanings are attributed to those events.

## **1.6 RESEARCH SITE AND SAMPLING**

This is an investigation of a specific school, which I believe has a certain type of information that is relevant for the research I have decided to undertake. The sampling is purposive because it, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 199), is done with a purpose in mind. Rocklands is representative of the kind of school in which the investigation is undertaken. Rocklands also possesses the features that need to be investigated and that is why the sampling is purposive. My site of investigation is a farm school and it is only within the farming environment that I seek some possible leads and answers to the research questions.

The site is chosen, according to Jorgensen (1989: 41) because of the opportunity it offers and the convenience it gives to the investigation. He also points out that the site should be sufficiently interesting and appropriate for the research question. Patton as quoted in Lincoln and Guba (1985: 200) suggests among other things, that when one needs to obtain information about an unusual case that may be particularly troublesome or enlightening purposive sampling becomes ideal choice to make.

## **1.7 GOALS OF RESEARCH**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of the principal in an academically successful farm school. The role of the principal is investigated through the opinions and experiences of the immediate members of the school community. The investigation identifies conditions within the school as well as from outside the school that might have helped or contributed to successful engagement. My study looks at how these conditions have been incorporated or utilized by the principal in order to be successful.

This goal is driven by several research questions:

*How is the principal perceived and experienced by members of the organisation as a leader of the school?*

*How does the principal perceive herself as a leader of the school?*

*How does her perceived role and style contribute to the school's sustained achievement?*

The farm school picture is normally dismal as depicted by various authors and this forms an important background as to how the Rocklands Farm School has operated and how it has been able to perform against the odds. This research is hoping to give some pointers on how schools in similar situations may operate. It is generally known that the Eastern Cape Province has not been doing well in the grade 12 results in recent years. Any attempt in improving results by paying particular attention to teaching and learning skills would go a long way to bringing respectability to the Eastern Cape's general

performance. This investigation hopes to point towards some possible routes that schools may take to improve their situation. I take the view expressed by Yin (1994) that each investigation within the case study approach will come out as a persuasive voice.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF STUDY**

Chapter one deals with the general overview of the research. It outlines the research protocol and helps to capture the investigative process. The outline locates the research site, the purpose of research and points to the importance of the undertaking. The overview serves as a summary of the work that becomes the essence of research.

Chapter two looks at the literature on leadership. The chapter presents a theoretical framework within which leadership is discussed. Various theoretical positions are presented to show how leadership understanding has continued to shift over the years.

Chapter three deals with methodology. The way in which I go about doing research is explained and justified. The interpretive paradigm is discussed and the methods of gathering data are presented. This is done with theoretical support so as to understand the choices I have made.

Chapter four deals with the presentation of the data. The respondents are introduced and the information they provided with the regard to research question is presented. It is here that the information is categorized and presented as such.

Chapter five is linked to the previous chapter. It is here that the data is discussed and analyzed. This is done within the theoretical dispositions discussed in Chapter three. The role of the principal emerges from this analysis as an expressed view of the respondent. The role of the principal finds expression in this chapter because it is the focus of my study. The role of the principal is discussed with the school's effectiveness serving as a term of reference.

Chapter six provides a presentation of my findings. This is done through reference to other relevant literature that serves as appropriate comment on the findings. Suggestions are put forward; a critique of the study is given and concluding remarks are made.

In the next chapter I present an overview of literature in leadership, organisational culture and school effectiveness, the three elements that seem pertinent to this study for reasons which I hope will become clear.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This literature review is presented in three important stages, *viz*; leadership theories, organizational culture and school effectiveness. I show how leadership has developed different concepts with shifting meanings as seen by various authors. I also show how leaders operate within the given organizational culture with special reference to the school culture. The intention is to show that leaders create culture and that they are also affected by culture. Thirdly, I look at school effectiveness as an important aspect of my study because Rocklands Farm School where my study is located has performed well in the past few years despite the fact that it faced tremendous challenges. I also look at school effectiveness and determine the extent of its features and qualities in Rocklands farm school. I determine whether the role of the principal has had any impact on school effectiveness. First I need to understand how leadership is defined as a concept before attempting to discuss leadership theories.

#### **2.2 LEADERSHIP**

Leadership research has tended to view leadership as an aspect of role differentiation or as an outgrowth of social interaction process. Bass (1990: 11) argues that the meaning of leadership may depend on the kind of institution in which it is found. He points out that leadership can be viewed as:

...a focus of group process, as a matter of personality, as a matter of enduring compliance, as the exercise to influence particular behaviours, as form of persuasion, as power relations, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role...

Leadership is a concept that does not refer to one specific idea but carries shades of meanings pointing towards two sets of ideas. Gardener as quoted in Fullan sees leadership as:

... the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers (Fullan 2000: 3).

From this description one is able to identify the two ideas emanating from it. The first is the idea of interaction between the leader and people and the second is that of the leader seeing to the accomplishment of objectives. Cawood and Gibbon make the issue explicit when they say:

To lead means basically to be out in front, to go ahead with the intention of being followed...The word lead strongly denotes an interpersonal relationship between those who go ahead and those who follow. A leader then, is one who not only leads but who is also followed (Cawood & Gibbon 1985: 3).

Cawood and Gibbon imply the organizational nature of leadership in their definition. The people-relation nature of leadership is made explicit. In an educational field principals are leaders whose work is basically to lead their institutions to attain goals and objectives that have been set up. The act of leadership is therefore an activity of relations.

This study looks at a principal of a farm school to determine how she leads and how the process of relationships from within and from outside has aided her in or impeded her from achieving her objectives. It is important to look at the role of leadership as this will play an important part in my study of Rocklands Farm School.

### **2.2.1 ROLE OF LEADERSHIP**

According to role of leadership theory each member of society occupies a position in the community as well as in various groups, organizations or institutions. In each position, an individual is expected to play a more or less well-defined role. Leadership is a role within the scheme of relations and is defined by reciprocal expectations between the leader and other members of the organization. According to Bass (1990: 17) leadership is defined by

stabilized expectations that are more exacting and that require greater obligations from the leader than from the other members of the group. He argues that leadership as a differentiated role is required to integrate various roles of the group and to maintain unity of action in the group's effort to achieve its goals.

Principals have to keep the organizational nature of their schools fully operational while at the same time they work with people in ensuring that the aims and objectives as set out are pursued and achieved. The role of leadership according to John Gardner in Fullan (2000: 6) is, among other things, for the leader to be able to think longer term, understand the relationship within the organization, be able to influence constituents, be able to craft a shared vision, be able to cope with conflicting requirements and be able to think in terms of renewal.

The roles mentioned here are not exhaustive but help to capture the essence of what leadership is in an organization and also what is expected of leaders to do. Sergiovanni sees leadership roles as metaphoric and that they are driven by technical, human, educational, symbolic and cultural forces (Sergiovanni 2001: 100). A principal who wants to push the school towards school effectiveness can be applying any of these forces to accomplish his/her goals. Roles suggest that leaders have tasks to fulfill within an organization and that there are also expectations from members of the organization and from those who are outside of the organization, so that the leader could deliver on prescribed mandates. Bass (1990: 383) sums up these roles as including sociability, initiative, persistence, knowing how to get things done, self confidence, alertness to and insight into situations, cooperativeness, popularity, adaptability and verbal facility.

My study concentrates on the role of the principal; what the principal does or has been doing up to the point of my investigation. It has been my intention to make use of the people within the school community to delineate the different roles of the principal as they perceive them. I realized that this would provide pointers to the school's progress or otherwise. My investigation helps to explain the extent to which the principal's influence and roles have impacted on the overall school performance. It was also my intention to establish reasons why the school had performed so well in the past few years. I have

looked at the general views and ideas about leadership roles. I now turn to examine leadership theories as espoused by various authors over the years.

## **2.2.2 LEADERSHIP THEORY**

### **2.2.2.1 TRAIT THEORY**

This theory is based on the view that leadership abilities are innate or simply put, that leaders are born. The theory emerged from the attributes the leaders showed during their term of leadership (Hughes *et al.* 1987: 263). Trait theory was based on the Aristotelian thinking which maintained that "...from the hour of birth, some are marked for subjection and others for rule" (Hoy and Miskel 1996: 376). The criticism leveled against trait theory was its inability to explain the environmental and situational factors that had a bearing on the leadership and leadership styles. Smyth (1989: 20) has criticized this theory and has regarded it as forming part of the traditional view of leadership. He described it as "... static, indifferent towards historical forces and ignorant of moral and political dimensions..."

Proponents of trait theory, according to Fullan, strengthened their belief in the theory because they maintained that the presence of leadership traits in an individual would be accepted almost without any regard to the situation in which the leader was functioning (Fullan 2000: 8).

It is not uncommon today to hear of people talking about a born principal; a thought that is derived from the observation people have had of such a leader as well as the way they communicate with him/her. At Rocklands where this study is situated I have observed that some people accept the traditional trait theory application as being a proper descriptive label of qualities of the incumbent. I have heard the Chairperson of the Governing Council describing the principal as a born leader; a real leader that you could not find easily. I have learnt from parents coming to the school describing the principal as a natural leader who was born to lead because she exercises her power for the benefit of all. This brings me to the next important step in the history of understanding leadership.

Inadequate explanations of trait theory and its inability to explain different leadership styles, meant that there had to be another explanation. Behaviour theory seemed at the time to provide the required balance.

### **2.2.2.2 BEHAVIOURIST THEORY**

Some authors have reinterpreted path-goal theory in terms of operant conditioning. For example Scott as cited in Bass (1990: 48) saw the need to replace the conception that leadership was due to influence or persuasion by making an analysis of the observable behaviours of leaders which ultimately changed the behaviours of the subordinates. All those behavioural theories emphasized reinforcement. They made the receipt of rewards or avoidance of punishment contingent on the subordinates behaving as expected or required.

Fullan says in support of this behavior theory that:

...acts of leadership take place in an unimaginable variety of settings which do much to determine the kind of leader that emerges and how such a leader plays his/her role (Fullan 2000: 8).

Horner (1997: 271) noted that there was a two-factor model within the behaviour theory with leadership either being task-orientated or people-orientated. He sees the two-factor model as a continuum that describes the leadership leanings as portrayed by a leader's style of leadership. This means that the way in which the leader deals with leadership demands will show whether leadership role lays emphasis on people he/she leads or whether his /her role lays emphasis on the tasks and goals to be accomplished.

Behavior theory gave rise to a belief that effective leadership could be taught with predictable results This was based on the understanding that leadership behaviour, under the same environmental factors, can be expected to be the same for all leaders. However, this theory could not explain the different leadership styles which emerged at times from the same environmental circumstances. It was necessary to find answers and contingency theory seemed to attempt to give some answers.

### **2.2.2.3 CONTINGENCY THEORIES**

On contingency theory Fiedler points out that the effectiveness of task orientated and relations orientated leader is contingent on the demands imposed by the situation (person situated theory). This focuses on how the person needs to be developed to be able to adapt to the needs of the situation.

Horner seems to be in support of the view expressed because he explains that contingency theories “...make the assumption that the effect of one variable on leadership are contingent on other variables” (Horner 1997: 271). Horner goes on to say that this theory provided a major insight at the time of its popularity because it opened a new understanding which showed that leadership could be different in every situation. It is also here that leadership styles may shift towards a people- centred approach or towards a task-orientated approach.

Fiedler’s contingency studies attempted to find leadership styles that were effective in certain situations (Fiedler 1967). The attempt was to match a leader with a situation that would be most conducive to a particular style of leadership. As can be seen here, contingency theories were seen to bring some kind of balance from trait and behaviour theories discussed earlier. Fullan felt that the balance brought about by the contingency theories was attempting to explain historical forces. He states that historical forces have created the circumstances in which leaders emerged but he also noted that leaders in turn have had their impact on history (Fullan 2000: 8). The belief then is that the interaction between the leader and the environment is ongoing. Each situation brings its own unique outcomes.

House and Mitchell as quoted in Horner (1997) have within the contingency theories developed a path-goal theory that seeks to understand the leadership style by concentrating on followers. The theory suggests that the leader “... is primarily responsible for helping followers develop behaviours that will enable them to reach their goals or desired outcomes” (Horner 1997: 271). One cannot fail to see the shift in emphasis and the attempt that is being made to look and understand leadership differently

from the previous trait and behaviour theories. Contingency theories were differing in approach and were building from the previous theories, thereby evolving into a complex analysis of the leader and the situation.

Contingency theory had situational leadership as one of its strong points. Fiedler as quoted in Horner (1997: 271) says that situational leadership was a combination of leader-member relations, tasks structure and position power. Through his research he claimed that certain leadership styles were more effective in certain situations. Although this was viewed as simplistic it attempted to match a leader to a situation that would be more conducive to that leadership style. In short this meant that leadership style, the situation in which the leader is found and the characteristics of the followers, will all be evaluated and the outcome would spell out the nature of that leadership within the contingency theory.

I need to understand the professional part of leadership and examine the various arguments brought in by authors. There is a kind of leadership that is intended to ensure that work is performed at an agreed level of professional growth. This separates those who do the work because they are told to do so and those who perform because there is virtue and value for educational growth. That is why I need to examine instructional leadership to see how it fits in with the rest of other leadership theories.

#### **2.2.2.4 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY**

According to Blase and Blase most schools have moved towards professionalism as they shift away from bureaucratic control (Blase and Blase 1999: 130). Blase and Blase explain instructional leadership as falling into 4 broad groups, viz. integration of tasks, group development, staff development and curriculum development. There is within these groups an inquiry orientated attempt to encourage teachers or followers to have a voice (Blase and Blase 1999: 131). Instructional leadership therefore, advances the cause of leadership a step further because it builds on a repertoire of flexible alternatives instead of collecting rigid procedures and methods (Blase and Blase 1999: 132).

Parts of the elements highlighted in the contingency theory appear to have been included in the instructional theory. The emphasis is on the followers or teachers in the case of schools who must be encouraged by leaders to be the active participants in the running of institutions. The motivational activity is prominently encouraged as means of improving leadership activities. Blase and Blase found that instructional leadership integrates collaboration, peer coaching, inquiry, collegial study groups and reflective discussion into holistic approach to promote professional dialogue among educators (Blase and Blase 1999: 137).

Recent studies have identified that effective instructional leadership encourages talk or voice among teachers so that they can develop reflective stances on their teaching practices and also promote their professional growth (Blase & Blase 2000). Glickman as quoted in Blase & Blase (2000: 130) explains further to say that instructional leadership is the ability to integrate tasks and give direct assistance to teachers, or staff members for their development.

The instructional leadership theory de-emphasizes leadership control and encourages co-operation and competition among teachers. This is closely related to transactional theory which I shall discuss in the next section.

#### **2.2.2.5 TRANSACTIONAL THEORY**

Burns as quoted in Smyth (1984: 41) contends that there are two basic leadership types, viz. transactional and transformational leadership. He argues that transactional leadership is:

...largely based on exchange relationships between leader and follower. Much of political leadership is transactional; a series of exchanges between politician and voter is characteristic. In exchange for the voter support the leader adopts a programme of promises designed for those particular groups. This type of leadership is representative of lay definitions of the term and is often what we think of when we consider politicians.

It is clear here that both the leader and the followers are motivated by self-interest or what they are likely to gain out of the engagement. In other words transactional leadership involves a bartering arrangement for good performance by the followers. Singer and Singer (1990) further describe transactional leadership as mechanistic than organic, with authority being centralized in a top-down approach. This is coupled with standardized operational procedures. Here you will find leaders conforming to standing rules rather than innovating or creating new approaches in their leadership environment.

The description here informs me that leaders are carrying out their mandate without changing the *status quo* but are doing so with promises of good returns for those who perform well. This situation does obtain in many schools. But I believe that it is not possible to find a leader who is completely transactional without including other elements found in other theoretical perspectives. The ability of the leader to carry out his tasks is also subject to organizational culture within which the leader acts. This sees the leader operating without upsetting the status quo but rather helps in its reproduction. I shall return to this when I deal with culture.

I return now to the other side of the coin as was presented by Burns, *viz*; transformational leadership, to see how the shift is made from the transactional leadership theory I have discussed to transformational leadership.

### **2.2.2.6 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY**

Tichy and Devana as cited in Bass (1990: 53) describe transformational leadership as a behavioural process capable of being learned and managed. They argue that it is the leadership process that is systematic, consisting of purposeful and organized search for changes, systematic analysis and the capacity to move resources from areas of lesser productivity to areas of greater productivity to bring in a strategic transformation.

According to Burns in Smyth (1984: 41) transformational theory suggests that leaders motivate their followers to act without self-interest but for the general good of the

organization. The followers must achieve goals that have high moral and ethical values to which all subscribe. He stresses this by stating that transformational leadership:

...is the ability of an individual to envision a new social condition and to communicate this vision to his followers. The leader here both inspires and transforms individual followers so that they too develop a new level of concern about their human condition, and sometimes the condition of humanity at large.

The issue of followers becomes critical in this theory. The success of an educational enterprise depends, to a large extent, on the followers cooperating and owning some of the decisions that are made. Dinkmeyer & Eckstein as quoted in Udjombala (2002: 12) stress that the success of an organization should be based on shared power rather than power over people. It must be common vision and commitment by all within the organization and the leader must create conditions conducive for cooperative engagement.

Transformational leadership is mostly needed during periods of tremendous change. Horner (1997: 278) suggests that the changes that are taking place outside the organization as well as inside it call for transformational leadership that is capable of ensuring that transition can be well managed.

Drath and Palus as quoted in Horner (1997:278) find that the constructionist approach finds home within transformational leadership. They argue that because of external and internal rapid changes the need for members of the organization to continually construct knowledge of themselves and the world around them cannot be ignored. It is through transformational leadership that this could happen. It is for some of these reasons that in schools we may find Departmental officials and the principal trying to ensure that change from the apartheid system towards democratic principles is addressed by committed leaders. In some cases we find management teams operating in schools to relieve the principal from many of the decision-making processes that he/she has to face. The team-based theory is helping in the flattening of the hierarchical structure within the organization in order to accommodate what transformational leadership aims for.

Drath and Palus in Horner (1997: 279) strengthen the constructionist approach by stating:

In constructing views of the world, people working together in an organization need to develop socially understood interpretations, so they can be effective as a group. This is the foundation from which People interpret, anticipate and plan, leadership requires participation from everyone so that all the members are engaged in creating and acting on that meaning.

According to Horner, these attempts ensure that the locus of power has shifted and that leadership is assuming a significantly different appearance (Horner 1997: 280). Schools, for example, are putting in various structures and leadership is involving everybody within the school environment from vision crafting to the owning of the outcomes the school produces.

Finally I need to examine the notion of charismatic leadership because I think that it may have found some meaning at Rocklands Farm School community. At the data analysis stage this concept emerges prominently and calls for a closer look to determine the extent of its influence on the general leadership actions of the principal.

### **2.2.2.7 THE NOTION OF CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP**

From the Greek language charisma entails, as explained in Sergiovanni "... ability to perform miracles, to predict the future and to possess the divinely inspired gifts" (Sergiovanni 2001: 137). The term has shifted to suggest mostly "divinely inspired gifts" to many people. Conger and Kanungo as quoted in Sergiovanni (2001) take the charismatic leadership term to mean that it is the followers who bestow this divinely inspired gift on their leaders. In other words, charisma is an interpretation of leaders' behaviour by the followers. They state further that there is a connection between what the leader does and the meanings that followers derive from these actions.

In support of the importance of followers in charismatic leaders Tucker as cited in Bass (1990: 187) has noted that followers can be under the spell of a leader and can accept him as supremely authoritative without necessarily agreeing with him on occasions or they may even refrain from arguing with him.

There are sets of generalizations intended for the leader based on what followers see, hear and what they think these mean to them. Conger and Kanungo as quoted in Sergiovanni (2001: 141) argue that charisma is not a personality trait but it is rather a set of leadership behaviours that can be duplicated with varying personalities. In their study they have found that charismatic leaders share some common elements with transformational leaders in that both are able to help others reach their higher levels of need fulfillment. These authors state that if needs are addressed the followers respond with higher levels of commitment, effort and performance. Bass (1990: 187) seems to agree with this view because he states that charismatic leaders vary greatly in their pragmatism, flexibility and opportunism and display different styles to achieve their impact.

Conger and Kanungo as cited in Sergiovanni (2001) have picked up some salient features that serve to denote a charismatic leader. These include:

- The ability to challenge the status quo
- Willingness to take personal risks
- Incur high costs to self
- Make self sacrifice and
- Ability to act in an unconventional way.

I find these features resonating with what I have observed at the Rocklands Farm School where I investigated the role of the principal. I wish to examine some of these features to see the extent to which they are applicable. The emergence of charismatic leaders can be traced down in history where some of the important leaders who had tremendous influence on the course of history were identified. Some of the salient features highlighted by Conger and Kanungo can be found in these leaders but again the emphasis has been what the followers felt about these leaders. For example Bass (1990: 192) pointed out that same words or actions by would-be leader can seem charismatic and extremely influential to ardent disciples but would be humbug to others.

I have looked at various theories on leadership and I need to see whether farm schools where my study is located, have had any meaningful leadership. I want to establish what the situation has been and how leadership has progressed to what it is at the present moment.

Recently there has been an emergence of leadership theories that are driven by post structural and postmodern thoughts. These have been brought in as alternative views in the understanding of leadership. Some authors have brought in these views in opposition to the prevalent theoretical ideas, most of which had been accepted as the norm. I examine the positions from which these new theories come and the influence they have had on the understanding of leadership in recent years.

#### **2.2.2.8 POST-STRUCTURAL AND POST-MODERN APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP**

Post-modern theories in general are regarded by Lyotard as cited in Sims (1998: 26) as mercantalisation of knowledge because according to his view, knowledge has become a commodity in line with the industrial world. He also points out that legitimation has become a problem because some people have decided what knowledge is or should be. He points out that earlier knowledge was defined in opposition to ideology. Lyotard had difficulties with this view because scientific knowledge was understood to possess proof or evidence. The difficulty lies in whether such proof or evidence was truthful. Post-modern theories argue against grand narratives of emancipation and triumph. These grand narratives created a hierarchy of knowledge and post-modern theories are flattening areas of inquiry to make knowledge performative because it provides answers to the use of knowledge rather than the truth of knowledge.

Post-structural theories also came to reject principles of structuralism. These theories became instruments of deconstruction from which feminism and post-modern thoughts emerged. All these challenge assumptions on which structuralism is based. These approaches have become critical of the essentially orderly picture offered by structuralists. Sims (1998: 342) points out that deconstructionists offer a more anarchic

alternative where difference rather than similarity is the defining characteristic. Post-modern and post-structuralists assumed that there were gaps and paradoxes in the structuralist systems and that actions were not predictable.

I shall be looking at both theories interchangeably since their standpoint has already been identified as a rejection of orderly structuralism and acceptance of the relativity of reality. Recent studies in leadership show that the concept has undergone a change in the manner it is understood. A change in the way in which leadership is understood is seen by Horner (1997:277) as having been caused to a great extent by the change in the environmental conditions. Just as economic conditions changed from industrially based economies to information based economies, so has the leadership thinking continued to shift from being linked to individuals to becoming an activity within an organization in which all participate.

Structuralist or traditional positions viewed leadership as a concept associated with persons who exercised power over the followers in organizations. The new thinking suggests that leadership is not associated with persons but rather has a number of people or the whole group working in various ways to enhance leadership qualities for the good of the organization. This has implied new ways of dealing with new challenges and the discarding of the old held views (Wilson *et al.* as quoted in Horner).

Post-modern approaches view leadership as a process in which leaders cease to be distinct individuals in charge of followers but rather are part of the community in a leadership practice (Horner 1997). The reason for this shift is that the traditional understanding of leadership is being criticized as simplistic and static. Post-structural approaches seek to understand leadership and organization within which leadership operates. Smyth (1989: 26) notes that leadership is part of "...containers holding people in relations of power..." He further suggests that leadership should be viewed as a relational concept developing over a lengthy period of time. It is processional and is in a constant state of flux.

Horner (1997: 278) points out that the understanding of leadership has traditionally been seen as involving a leader and followers where dominance and influence were primarily

vehicles for leadership. The postmodern view is that leadership is a process and that people in an organization "...do not need to be motivated and dominated, instead everyone involved in the activity is assumed to play an active role in leadership." Anderson (1996: 21) elaborates on this view and argues that postmodern thought is characterized by continual change of perspectives with no underlying "common frame of reference but rather a manifold of changing horizons..." Anderson believes that language and knowledge do not copy reality but constitute reality.

The postmodern attitude involves suspicion and "...refined sensibility" to what happens on the surface. Postmodern thought is open to differences and nuances of what appears to be a given rather than what has been or what could be. To illustrate this point it is important to note that in South Africa for example, leadership knowledge and practices have been the domain of white males. For some time this was taken as given until Marxist critiques and eventually postmodern and post-structural thoughts came to the fore to argue against what appeared to be unquestionably correct.

Gunter (2001: 12) argues against the traditionally held views. She points out that intellectual work prevailed in traditional literature and it was knowledge for the few who dominated the majority. She points out that this position was the cause for concern for the postmodern and post-structural theorists.

A post-modern construction of leadership suggests that both the leader and the organization need to approach their activities from a view that "...focus (es) on the interpretation and negotiation of meaning of the social world" (Kvale 1996: 41) in which they find themselves. In other words, according to Starratt (1996: 4) individuals are embedded in cultures and language communities and any knowledge that emerges will be socially constructed. People within an organization acting with a leader make sense of their world by "...continually construct(ing) knowledge of themselves and the world around them..." (Horner 1997: 278). This point finds support from Fullan (2000: 13) who states that leadership is an area of relationships and negotiations.

Post-modern approaches also suggest team leadership resulting from integration and adoption of group work. This is in line with a constructionist approach. Here leadership is connected to the workings of the team members and joint ownership of leadership outcomes. The production and reproduction of knowledge is a joint effort because individuals are embedded in cultures and language of the community where leadership knowledge is contested in a dialogical situation (Starratt 1996: 41).

Postmodern approaches to leadership argue further by stating that there is no certainty about the outcome of leadership engagement. What sometimes appears to be an orderly leadership connection between the leaders and members of the organization has in fact, tensions, paradoxes and contradictions that are dictated to by power relations (Gunter 2001: 12). Smyth (1989: 31) captures the importance of the power relations when he stresses that "...the relational, dialectical dimensions..." found within an organization emphasize the "...process of reality construction and give force to the human agency of the people in organization..."

The challenges that are posed by the post structural and postmodern conception of leadership are that we should problematize the readily accepted traditional views of leadership. This also enables one to gain an understanding of the concept of leadership from various perspectives. Post-modern perspectives challenge our readiness to take things for granted. They rather seek to carefully question the leadership knowledge and practice as conceptualized over the years. There is a close link between post-modern and post-structural theories and the feminist critique of leadership, which I am now going to examine. I have indicated earlier that leadership has been the domain of men and that the advent of women leaders has been a struggle. From the Marxist criticism females have advanced and were helped by post-structural and postmodern thoughts that challenged the male dominated leadership world. I am able to look at feminist perspectives of leadership to understand the position from which they stand and to determine the link post-structural and post-modern theories have on feminist critique.

### **2.2.2.9 FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF LEADERSHIP**

Bass (1990: 717) argues that in our society we are socialized primarily within the nuclear family in a culture that defines sex roles as total roles and that also defines our sense of self and our behaviour. He states further that sex roles pertain to all aspects of life and take precedence over situation-specific work roles if they are compatible. He points out that dominance and independence are, as a result, associated with masculine roles while submissiveness, passivity and nurture are associated with feminine roles.

#### **2.2.2.9.1 THE HISTORY OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP**

Women have been leaders for a long time but their leadership has always been viewed from the man's perspective. The other view has been that women lead differently from their male counterparts. Van der Westhuizen (1991: 521) points out that:

... women and men do not only experience the world around them in totally different ways but ... the actual experience of women apparently differs undeniably from the world which men experience daily.

Part of this difference is seen by Shakeshaft (1989) as associated with different gender roles stemming from socialization processes. Children born into the society are socialized into different roles as males and females and this has led to the belief that the way women handle leadership roles differs from that of man.

The gender-based beliefs and practices made women ideal for the raising and caring of children from what the man provided. In line with this thinking women were ideal as part of education enterprise because they would continue the roles that are consciously and subconsciously prescribed by and embedded in their social prerogatives (Greyvenstein 2000: 32). The point made by Greyvenstein is that different social roles have led to the belief that women have different traits from men in the way they lead. As a result, women have been regarded as weak, passive, emotional, dependent, fearful and unsure of themselves, whereas men on the other hand were noted for being aggressive, impersonal, forceful, fearless, independent, self assured and rational. It is because of these differences

according to Shakeshaft (1989: 25) that an assumption is made that the teaching profession fits women because of their motherly role of caring for children.

#### **2.2.2.9.2 THE MALE WORLD AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP**

The emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the understanding that, in all societies which divide the sexes into different cultural, economic or political spheres, women are always less valued than men (Bass 1990: 41). The point that is being made here is that the patriarchal society in which we live has made it difficult for women to play their role in a meaningful way because all they do is viewed from a man's world. Shakeshaft (1989: 171) points out that the differences between men and women leaders are socially constructed and have very little to do with the capacity of women to lead but tend to emphasize the difference in the manner in which women do things.

Eggins (1997: 24) stresses that there has been subtle discrimination perpetuated by the male dominated society, which observed that there was very little difference between male and female management styles. The rationalization behind this difference was that female leaders had successfully adopted masculine behaviour. He states:

...because management and leadership have for a long time been predominantly male enclaves the picture of ideal manager is grounded in masculine attributes.

Blackmore as quoted in Ngcobo (1996: 10) argues that the "great man" theory in which the behavioural traits of women had been constructed is in fact a discriminatory machine that serves to exclude women from certain jobs, particularly the leadership jobs. The point is therefore made that if women have to develop into autonomous female subjects, capable of speaking in their own voice within a culture that has reduced them into the status of objects, the society within which they operate must give them the space to develop.

On the other hand, Bradford as quoted in Rosener (1991: 155) argues that there is no reason or valuable point in assigning certain leadership attributes to one sex or gender as these could be found in both men and women. This position gains support from Kanter in

Carless (1998: 4) when he argues that the major issue in organization is for the managers to be able to meet the organization's expectations not conforming to culturally defined gender roles.

To illustrate the point, it is interesting to note that some authors identified certain attributes as belonging specifically to women. For example Tanton (1994: 68) and Marshall (1995: 314) identified democratic leadership, participatory and power-sharing techniques as special attributes of women leaders. They also regarded women as transformational in their leadership approaches as they had skills to facilitate negotiations. Davidoff *et al.* (1994: 16) see these attributes as counter productive in that they may create an unfavourable leadership situation for women leading to laissez faire attitudes, or to too many voices being heard. Davidoff *et al.* believe that such a situation is a recipe for management difficulties.

The different view points I have highlighted between male and female leadership are regarded by Kimbrough and Buckett (1990: 108) as characteristics rather than issues of character. On the basis of characteristics the tendency has been to design leadership or positions of power as a scenario suitable for men. The feminist critique argues that leadership emerges in the social system and may well be contingent upon many factors. The argument goes on to state that there is no universal set of factors suitable for a particular gender because leadership position emerges as a result of interaction of multiple variables.

Feminist theorists have identified as a primary source of women's oppression the cultural construction of females which renders women insignificant objects of desire (Bass 1990: 42). Putman as quoted in Tanton (1994) contends that as long as organization's practices construct the identities of men and women very differently, women will be cast as marginalized actors. He points out that the female management style is a product of male organizational culture and is therefore, discriminatory.

Feminist theorists have moved from the emancipatory narrative of the enlightenment era. It was at this level that they were positioning themselves in order to express their desire for liberation. The present feminists argue that the grand narratives of the enlightenment

era have lost their legitimating power. They have discovered a binary critique expressed through opposition which had been operating in the male dominated world to the detriment of females.

The principal of Rocklands Farm School is a woman and it will make an interesting study to look at her performance with the feminist critique literature that I have already referred to, in mind. I examine briefly the leadership and the organizational culture to see how these affect the overall performance of the leader. I regard school culture, in particular as critical in the manner in which the principal carries out his/her duties. There are external forces impacting on the school culture like the influence the Department of education exerts on the school as well as the influence from the wider community within which the school resides. All these would have a bearing on the principal's performance.

### **2.2.3 LEADERSHIP IN FARM SCHOOLS**

In the following paragraphs I discuss farm school leadership as it has evolved over the years in South Africa. I look at how farm schools have been governed and how these governing practices have impacted on the general administration of farms. I do this by looking at the historical events as they unfolded driven by political forces. Through this process the emergence of leadership in Rocklands Farm School can be understood within the farm school context.

A Ministry of Education and Culture document entitled Draft Report on Farm Schools (1995) describes farm schools as "...normally established, owned and managed by a farmer." This document continues to explain that farm schools were usually established on privately owned farm lands (Government of the Eastern Cape 1995: 1). An important feature of farm schools is what Gordon discovered. He noted that farm schools have always been a neglected sector (Gordon 1991). As a result of his observation good performance from such schools was highly unlikely. However my study looks at a farm school that is performing well to determine the important features that have assisted it to do well and the role the principal may have played in this.

Hartshorne (1992: 137) explains that farm schools had no proper “legal definition” before 1953 but after the release of the Eiselen Commission of 1949-1951, there was an attempt to identify farm school situations. This was achieved by legislative process that followed the Commission’s report. At the time of redefining farm schools the Government of the day was politically motivated to remove farm schools from missionary control. Here the schools were normally run by principals who were mostly affiliated to the churches. The churches in turn controlled the schools and paid salaries of teachers and principals. Some of these principals were lay preachers or linked in some way to some of those churches. The removal of the farm schools from mission control was effected through the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953. The attempt by the Government to have a clearly defined farm school brought in a lot of difficulties, which Nasson as cited in Hartshorne (1992: 137) describes as “bitter harvest”. He noted, among other things that there was:

...a dreadful reality of farm school dependence and ...almost absolute power of the white farmer resulting in a situation of ruling class paternalism and working class deference.

This legislative decision came in to highlight the already existing disadvantages and difficulties associated with farm schools educational enterprise. Nasson as quoted in Hartshorne (1992: 139) found that farm schools were:

... ill equipped to offer very much more than the bare architecture of basic formal education, these schools form the lowliest most persistently neglected link in the chain of apartheid education. Inferiority, low status, and dreadful neglect are themes, which dominate not only the history of farm schooling. They are qualities which continue to define social recognition of farm schools today.

In a farm school like any other school there are different stakeholders whose influence and power on the principal may determine to a certain extent the success or failure of the educational enterprise. I investigate to see how these power relations impact on overall school performance. Gunter says that “...leadership in educational studies can be seen as the process and product by which powerful groups are able to control and sustain their

interests” (Gunter 2001: 18). This becomes even more particular when we look at the power ambiguity of the principal and that of the farm manager.

The manager wields the power bestowed on him by government, which among other things gives the manager the right to open or close schools, hire and fire teachers and some discretion on how the school is run in his farm. There is also a principal on the other hand who has to control the learners, instill discipline and manage the whole schooling process. These functions create tension between the principal who is expected to carry out Department of Education instructions while at the same time the principal has to listen and obey what the farm manager wants or demands.

The principal acts as an administrator who has to correspond with the local Education Department but is incapable of minimizing the power of the farm owner over the school. The Education Department is also unable to exert any pressure on the farmers to desist from acting against the interest of education.

The principal has to manage and lead a school that is poorly resourced under a manager who may or may not be interested in what happens in the classrooms (Government of the Eastern Cape (1995). In their observation Gaganakis and Crew (1987: 4) maintain that farm managers seem to wield more power because “...education of nearly half a million black children in South Africa is subject to the will of private individuals” They also observed that farmers’ children did not attend these schools hence their probable lack of interest in these schools (Gaganakis & Crew 1987: 3). In essence the principal who depends on regulations the Department of Education issues from time to time, can only organize teaching and learning processes subject to the mood of the farm manager and the farm needs as well as resources and many other human and material factors.

It is clear from what has been found here that the principal’s authority and power were seriously curtailed and they appear to be so even today. It looks as though there are very limited prospects for the principal of a farm school to change the *status quo*. Leadership in farm schools therefore, is ambiguous in that the boundaries of power and authority of

the principal and that of the farm manager over the school's daily activity is not clearly defined and continues to be a source of tension and indecision on the part of the principal.

## **2.3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP**

The way things are done in an organization point to a cultural practice that is constantly being evaluated and continues to interface with people who create and recreate it. Leaders, as a result of their interaction with school culture will ultimately lead in a certain way. Leaders will affect the school culture as the school culture will affect them. Schein (1992: 12) describes culture as:

...a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptations and integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to the problem.

Schein (1992) notes that leaders shape culture in an organization by paying attention to some aspects of it and by ignoring other aspects. Leaders measure and control what is under their jurisdiction and they recruit and select new members who will have to comply with the demands of the organization. He notes also that rituals and success stories entrench a particular culture and thereby shape the general culture of an organization in a certain way.

Bass (1990: 591) maintains that anecdotal evidence and arguments abound in considering how the organization's leadership influences its culture. He notes that transactional leaders work within the existing culture in an organization while transformational leaders change culture. He points out that leaders who influence and change organizational culture must have personalities with a deep sense of vision and purposefulness because they create rather than maintain the *status quo*. Leaders who are concerned about organizational renewal will seek to foster organizational cultures and climates that are hospitable and conducive to creativity, problem-solving, risk taking and experimentation.

Sergiovanni sums up culture and the activities that take place within an organization or school, in the case of principals as "...observable behavioral regularities, which are defined by the rules of the game for getting along" (Sergiovanni 2000: 124).

Leaders have to be familiar with the rules of the game whilst at the same time they maintain or create new ways of doing things. This calls for transformational leadership that would ensure that everyone performs to the best of his/her ability within the stipulated rules and norms (Firestone and Wilson as cited in Boys 2002: 27). In an ordinary school I believe that it is seldom that the principal would be purely transformational or purely transactional. I believe that a leader may encompass both or lean towards one while retaining elements from the other.

Weich quoted in Sergiovanni (2001: 129) cautions on the negative consequences of cultural effects on schooling. He says "...tenacious culture can be a rigid culture that is slow to detect changes and opportunities and slow to change." Sergiovanni states that culture could be a stumbling block to innovation because he says that the goodness of things carried out by the leader in a certain way become an impediment when changes have to be implemented. The reason is that the community has internalized one way of doing things. In other words the school community "... is so entrenched that this becomes a constraint to innovation."

Whilst culture is a form of identity that permeates through the organization it must be able to accommodate change and be able to adapt to new changes if the organization is to prosper (Boys 2000: 29). This is also true of schools, where principals have to lead. Rocklands Farm School, for example, through its historical development created a way of life within the school that has enabled it to perform consistently well for a number of years. The community of Rocklands seem to have accepted the way the school is run as the norm. This in turn has meant that the school continues to have a successful engagement and as a result has an academically high achievement rate.

It is now important to look at the third aspect of my discussion in the light of the good performance by Rocklands Farm School. I indicated that a working school culture has already been established that saw the school perform well and this may have been

brought about by certain styles of leadership. School effectiveness as a concept that has been investigated over many years has to be positioned within the farm school area to determine its extent and effect.

## **2.4 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS DEBATE**

In order to look at school effectiveness I have decided to look at the general characteristics of a good school as a base from which to build the school effectiveness. Good schools are normally those that are well managed, able to link with the communities in which they are found and capable of producing good results. To understand school effectiveness I look at what makes a school good.

### **2.4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD SCHOOL**

Blumberg and Greenfield in Sergiovanni (2001) have found in their studies of successful schools that principals in these schools are proactive and:

...direct behaviours at building and articulating a vision of what the school is and can become. ... Nearly all these studies ... identify the concept of ethos (shared goals and expectations and associated modes of behaviour) or strong school culture as being an important characteristic. Important to this culture are norms and values that provide for cohesion and identity and that create a unifying moral order or ideology from which teachers and students derive direction meaning and significance (Sergiovanni 2001).

As has been indicated, the position of Sergiovanni here does stress the principal's involvement in the school's ultimate good performance. Doyle and Wells realize that, as factors tabled in Sergiovanni call for serious consideration, they are finally looking at relationships between school and its environment as well as the interpersonal relationships within the school (Doyle & Wells 1997: 147)

Christie's (2001) study of resilient schools is persuasive. She notes that the success of those resilient schools was grounded in good leadership and management. She also found that good teaching and learning were central to the success story of these schools. The environment for the success was brought about by principals who possessed, among other

things, ability to adapt, commitment, sense of purpose, concern for others and the courage to see things through. With these guidelines in mind I discuss these in chapter 5 to the extent to which they make the school effective.

There are some important points raised by various authors about a good school and these are not at variance with school effectiveness studies. From the general points I raised here about characteristics of a good school the issue of good leadership keeps on emerging from these studies. I want now to look at what school effectiveness is and how the concept has developed over the years.

#### **2.4.2 LEADERSHIP AND THE NOTION OF SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS**

Sergiovanni (2001: 163) finds school effectiveness to have a common meaning and a technical meaning. He describes school effectiveness from a common understanding as "... ability to produce desired effect." On the technical level he points out that school effectiveness refers to a school "... whose students achieve well in basic skills or basic competency standards as measured by achievement tests" (Sergiovanni 2001: 163). Barnard in Beare *et al.* (1989: 11) sum up school effectiveness by stating that "...an action is effective if it accomplishes its specific objective aim." The same authors put effectiveness in a school differently and they say: "... you are effective if you set yourself a target and then hit it."

Rutter in Beare *et al.* (1989) conducted studies on school effectiveness and helped identify one of the important elements of school effectiveness, viz. parental choice. He noted that it did matter which school the child attended as this was a parental decision. He went on to note that good results provided a strong indication of what the worthwhile activities of the school were and how good organizational structures were used to help the school to succeed. Parents would be inclined to choose such schools, particularly if they observe that such schools are performing very well. They would do so because they see the chances of their children doing well in such a school increasing.

There is a strong suggestion here of school effectiveness having been brought about by a certain leadership style or styles. School effectiveness implies good leadership, good organizational capability, good understanding and maintenance of effective relationships. Literature on school effectiveness states that strong leadership is one of the major requirements for a successful school. Purkey and Smith (1983) confirm this when they say that school site management and instructional leadership are among the necessary characteristics for school effectiveness.

Gunter (2001) on the other hand is cautious about a simplistic understanding of leadership in an effective environment. She raises questions, asking "... who is staking the claim for a particular version of a performing school, what those claims are, who is listened to and who receives claims and validation..." (Gunter 2001: 18). This cautions those who investigate school effectiveness that they need to be aware of sometimes, simplistic approaches. She argues that good results proving that a school is effective may be contested. Doyle and Wells (1997: 145), for example, argue that one of the main problems facing researchers of effective schools is inadequate consideration of the "...systems perspective of how organizations are influenced by external social factors."

The case in point is that social factors in Rocklands Farm School seem not to have influenced the school to poor performance. Instead the school has performed beyond what is expected perhaps because of the school's approach to schooling. It seems here that school's capacity to perform well could not be restricted by the external environmental influences alone. It looks as though the human element has played a crucial role in changing the situation for the better. In other words, as Gunter (2001) has argued, school effectiveness may be contested as it does not conform to simplistic analysis.

I regard Rocklands Farm School as an effective school and my investigation will take into account the different positions posed by various authors on school effectiveness. This is an effective farm school that seems to have overcome to a great extent the restrictive and constraining environmental factors that many authors have identified as impacting negatively on farm schools. The consequence of these poor environmental

factors has always been linked to poor performance. Before I turn my attention to the site of my investigation, I summarize the main issues raised by this literature review.

## **2.5 SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have looked at leadership theory as is defined by various authors and found that there is an important distinction between people-orientated and task-orientated leadership. The ideological framework from which different authors describe the concept of leadership creates differences of interpretation.

I then described different types of leadership theories as they developed over time and how these theories have shaped the way we understand leadership. Trait theory shows a belief in innate abilities. This theory was based on Aristotelian thinking and has shaped our own way of thinking about leadership but because of its inadequacy in explaining situational and environmental factors new ways of explaining leadership have become necessary (Smyth 1989). This led to behaviour theory, which argued that leadership adjusts to environmental factors and proposed that leadership could be taught with predictable results. But this theory could not explain the situational circumstances that confronted leaders and the manner in which the leaders dealt with these situations.

It became necessary to consider contingency theory which attempted to provide answers to leadership success as contingent upon other variables (Horne 1997). It also shifts the emphasis from the leader to those who are being led. Contingency theory recognizes that certain leadership styles are more appropriate or effective in certain situations than in others. Recent leadership theories have applied instructional theory, transactional theory and transformational theory. Instructional theory looks at the leader as a capable person who ensures that academic work is carried out to the best of people's ability. He also encourages teachers to develop a high sense of academic and professional growth. Transactional leadership ensures that all school activities are carried out efficiently and effectively. This goes beyond the work of the classroom to effective organizational structure. However, the process here carries incentives and reinforcers as a bartering operation to motivate followers to perform well.

On the other hand transformational theory suggests a high moral ground for the leader who motivates people in an organization for higher ideals that go beyond most theoretical positions. People in an organization become the owners of leadership outcomes and are able to share in the leadership processes. I have looked at the charismatic leader as a special type of leader with particular “inspired gifts” that distinguish such leaders from the rest.

I have also looked at post-modern and post-structural positions on leadership and found that the thrust of their argument is based on the relativity of reality. The belief is that knowledge is constructed and cannot be taken as given. Leadership is a concept constructed by all people within a given organization. They all participate in creation or construction of leadership. While the traditional view holds that leadership is associated with individuals the post-modern and post-structural theories believe in socially constructed leadership practices.

I have also examined briefly leadership and cultural influences. I found that leaders affect and are affected by the culture of their organization. The manner in which leaders deal with culture could mean the difference between success and failure (Sergiovanni 2001). I looked at leadership and organizational culture with special reference to school culture.

I looked at the roles of leadership and found that these roles tell me about what leaders do or are supposed to be doing. While there were divergent views on the matter the common trend was that leaders needed to create understanding within organizations so as to enable them to influence the constituents to performance well (Fullan 2000).

I have looked at school effectiveness and leadership and I have noted that various authors like Purkey and Smith, Gunter (200), Edmonds (1979) and Doyle and Wells (1997) find good leadership a key component for good results in a school. I have examined some of these roles within the Rocklands Farm School and found very distressing conditions under which the school principal of Rocklands had to operate. I was exposed to

Christie's(2001) idea of resilience which enabled me to understand the extraordinary performance the school has achieved from 1998 to 2001.

The next chapter outlines the methodological approach of this study. I discuss the research orientation, the case study method, sampling, data collection and analysis and limitations of the approach.

# CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 THE INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

This study is conducted in the interpretive paradigm. According to Terreblanche and Durrheim (1994: 124) interpretive research: "...relies on first-hand accounts, tries to describe what it sees in rich detail and presents its findings in engaging and sometimes evocative language." I also move from the understanding that the interpretive paradigm involves qualitative research. According to Winegardner (2001) this is an interpretation by the researcher of social environment. She points out that interpretations are transitional and situational.

In support of this Eisner and Peshkin (1990: 249) state that qualitative research:

...has to adopt, create and use a variety of non-quantitative research methods to describe the rich interpersonal, social and cultural contexts of education more fully than can quantitative research.

This strengthens the belief that the intention of qualitative research is an attempt to inform our deep understanding of issues and thereby help in the interpretation processes as well as through narrative description. The interpretive approach criticizes quantitative approaches for assuming that there is a world out there to be controlled and measured. This study looks at human behaviour and its interpretation and takes the stand that a quantitative approach would be inappropriate especially if the attempt here is to address the research question. This criticism becomes stronger from Habermas as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 19) when he states:

Scientism silences an important debate about values, informed opinion, moral judgments and beliefs. [It] ...seriously diminishes the very characteristics that make humans human.

With this view in mind, the Rocklands study does exactly that it engages the opinions and judgments of respondents because, according to Becker as cited in Cohen *et al.* (2000: 21) people are not "cultural dopes or passive dolls" of positivism but participate fully in

the phenomenon in which they are part. In support of this position Garfinkel as cited in Adler & Adler (1987: 25) maintains that research should focus on:

...how people in their everyday lives, make sense out of, ascribe meaning to and create a social structure of the world through a process of continual negotiation and interpretation.

To strengthen this point Dowding (1997: 29) goes on to contend that qualitative approach allows researchers to examine a large number and range of behaviours and meanings amongst members of the organization to bring out details which would have been overlooked in a quantitative approach.

In the light of the foregoing statements I wish to emphasize the importance of the interpretive orientation to my study. I am investigating the role of the principal in a successful farm school as seen through the eyes of the respondents. The role of the principal will be built by opinions, views and experiences of the people. These will be appropriately accommodated in the interpretive approach. The intention is also not to arrive at generalization or to establish a causal relationship but rather to gain persuasive voices of the respondents about leadership role as it is studied in its natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 3). This research attempts to maintain interaction with respondents as they begin to make sense of their situation as well as reflecting on the meanings they attach to their actions.

It is also important to suspend the researcher's biases, perceptions and judgments but rather to allow the interpretations the participants bring to the phenomena being studied to speak for themselves. The teachers, learners and other participants will be allowed to present their own way of understanding of leadership roles and how these roles have led to school success.

### **3.2 LEADERSHIP AND THE INTERPRETIVE ORIENTATION**

Leadership is understood to embody people and organization. Leadership cannot successfully be reduced into a quantifiable report since it deals with relationships and behaviours in context. It is also difficult to separate leaders, their work and the

socialization processes that take place throughout the leadership cycle. I believe that a leader gains experiences, develop attitudes, perceptions and biases about leadership practices. The same can be said about the people within the organization. These point to subjectivity and the realization of complexities of society in which leaders and other members of the organization find themselves (Mwingi 1997: 42).

The interpretive orientation understands the use of language by the respondents and the interpretation of the meanings of that language in context. Those who are within the Rocklands leadership environment will express perceptions about leadership and the appropriate manner to capture the ideas of the respondents will be through a qualitative approach. Holland as cited in Mwingi (1997: 42) agrees with this position when he states that a qualitative paradigm of leadership allows for what he calls personalized investigation. Creswell adds that an interpretive approach is value-laden and that the researcher has to constantly report on his values, biases and the perceptions of the informants (Creswell 1994: 6). This means that I have to work within a paradigm that will enable me to capture the subjectivity of the individuals and pursue a relatively open-ended exploration of each participants' views on the principal's role.

Recent researchers have used the qualitative paradigm to try to understand various aspects of leadership thereby illuminating some leadership insights. (Ngcobo 1996, Van der Mescht 1996, Mnguni 1988, Duff 1991, Kauaria 2002, Udjombala 2002). The qualitative approach in my study relates to how the leader is viewed by others at Rocklands. I hope that this would show how relations and integration processes within the school system work.

### **3.3 METHODS**

#### **3.3.1 CASE STUDY**

This research will be conducted as a case study in which the ethnographic technique of interviews and participant observation will be used. The case study approach is clarified by Hart (1993: 103) when he states that it:

...relies on detailed analysis of interaction processes among people, especially the analysis of talk [which is] ... uniquely suitable method [for]... understanding principal's leadership, because the vast majority of these interactions are verbal.

Holland as cited in Mwingi (1999: 42) stresses that a case study method enables the researcher to extract information from phenomena over which he/she has little control and come up with significant associations, illuminating information and persuasive arguments. According to Becker as cited in Mwingi (1999: 46) a case study the researcher realizes that he/she works with people who are integrated beings with working parts and boundaries. As a result people become active subjects. They are not only affected by internal and external influences but are themselves centres of meaningful action and reaction. A case study takes these matters into consideration

Stake as cited in Mwingi (1999: 46) states that a case study is therefore well suited for understanding human relations because it is able to appreciate the uniqueness and complexities of people to be studied because people are embedded within the context of the phenomenon to be studied. Rocklands is an academically successful farm school and my investigation allows the respondents to describe through their own experiences the actions of the principal within the farming community. Dowding (1997: 30) says:

Case study allows a movement beyond formal conceptions of the organization to consideration of informal phenomena that reflects the members' meanings and sense-making practices.

It means that the case study method will encompass intrinsic and instrumental techniques. In the intrinsic technique the case study will be learning about the principal's role and the successful school while the instrumental technique will bring forth interesting actions of good performance against the odds. This will give the researcher insight into how schools may begin to understand leadership roles and school effectiveness (Stake 1995)

The use of the case study in this instance enables the researcher to deliberately get information that is context-bound because this may also be pertinent to the principal's role that is being investigated (Yin 1994: 13). The intention, according to Patton, is to understand a particular event, role, group or interaction. This entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for the study. The researcher enters the world of the

informants and through on-going interaction, seeks the informants' perspective and meanings (Patton 1990, Cohen & Manion 1994).

### **3.3.2 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

This research tool is intended to get into the lived world of the Rocklands farm school participants. It observes how these people make sense of their world and how they give meaning as well as how they interact as a result of those meanings (Jorgensen 1989: 14). It is the intention of the researcher to get closer to the insiders' conception of their reality. I understand that this would be difficult if I were an outsider. I want to ensure that actions of Rocklands participants and meanings thereof come from their own standpoints (Jorgensen 1989). Jorgensen to put the case for participant observation:

The methodology of participant observation involves a flexible, open-ended, opportunistic process and logic of inquiry through which what is studied is constantly subject to redefinition based on field experience and observation (Jorgensen 1989: 23).

I take the point made by Jorgensen that gaining entry to this school and becoming part of the school's daily routine would help me to "constantly" redefine what I see against the changing environmental interactions. I believe that this will have significant impact on the interview data and shall help in a broader approach to interpretation and analysis.

Cohen *et al.* (2000: 311) stress the importance of participant observation because it reduces the "reactivity effect." It also enables the researcher to see how events evolve over time, catching the dynamics of situations, the people, personalities, contexts, resources, roles and so on. Participant observation helps in facilitating thick description which lends itself to accurate explanation and interpretation of events rather than relying on the researcher's own influences. The importance of context and time finds support from Lincoln & Guba (1985: 189) who argue that reality construction cannot be separated from the world in which it is experienced and that any observations that might be made are inevitably time and context dependent. They argue that no phenomenon can

be understood out of relationship to the "...time and context that spawned, harboured and supported it" (*Ibid.*).

A word of caution from Jorgensen is that entrance into the insiders' world can cause the researcher to lose focus and get blinded by his closeness to participants' daily lives. The researcher's own image may be affected by participant observation while it may also be true that the participant observer influences the participants in a certain way. The possibility that the researcher may be invading the insiders' world must not be lost sight of, and care must be taken to ensure mutual understanding.

According to Ely (1991: 50) there are some difficulties in becoming "the other" because the researcher has to assume the role of an apprentice as he/she begins to learn the roles of the people he/she is to investigate. Getting engaged in "shadowing" makes the researcher conspicuous and may result in respondents becoming over sensitive. She warns against these pitfalls and advises that the researcher should be aware of these shortcomings and be ready to ameliorate the situation. At Rocklands the openness and readiness to clarify all issues and preparedness to actively anticipate potential difficulties by talking to the people helped me to gain the confidence of the participants and allayed their fears of the unknown to a great extent. It then became easy to become "the other."

Participant observation was undertaken at Rocklands Farm School for about 5 months, January to May 2003 and the main focus was to see what was going on and record these daily events as they occurred. I became involved in the daily running of the school by assisting in the academic and administrative work of the farm school. My involvement went beyond school-bound activity to include extra-curricular activities like sport and music. While these activities eased tension and made my entry into the insiders' world much easier and acceptable there was a problem of attachment I had to deal with later. Ely (1991: 51) warns that participant observation over time may create emotional attachment that may be hard to break. She goes on to warn participant observers against the unintended consequences that result from performing certain tasks. She says that researchers "should not be co-opted by the willingness to be useful" as this may affect their findings. Ely suggests that the researchers may be involved in school activities as long as they remind themselves that their job is to "describe, not to fix or judge" (*Ibid.*).

I was also looking for the way the teachers related to the principal and how the principal spoke and acted within the school. I started a journal to record my daily encounters with the school's activities. This journal served as a diary as well in that all plans of each day were recorded and the actual activities taking place were also recorded. The journal had two focal points, *viz*:

Internally focused observations: What happened each day at school?

Externally focused or contextually focused observations: What happened outside the school premises and what happened when learners and teachers were engaged in out of school activities.

I also recorded my impressions and reflections on the events and issues as they emerged.

I kept in mind that the intention was to gather as much information as possible to understand what the teachers were saying and doing. This was also true of the principal's actions and the interaction between the teachers and the principal on one hand and the principal and the learners on the other. I was guided by the belief that participant observation would enable me to draw inferences about the respondents' meanings and perceptions. This would add more value to the interview data and their analysis (Maxwell 1996: 76).

### **3.3.3 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews because while key elements for exchanging views are retained the open-ended stance adopted allows for a rich and detailed discussion of those key elements. This allows for a free flowing engagement that changes the ordinary question and answer routine into a two-way discussion process (Seidman 1989: 3).

Kvale (1996: 18) describes this type of interview as based on the conversation of daily life. He regards it as aimed at obtaining the description of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena. This assumes that social knowledge and reality are not objective data to be quantified but are meaningful relations to be interpreted (Kvale 1996). The idea therefore, is to find meanings and ideas of respondents about the role of their leader. Meaningful interpretation may emerge from the interview interaction. Kvale (1996) notes that a “...qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge. He goes on to emphasize that the purpose of the exercise is to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perspective (Kvale 1996: 14).

Seidman (1991: 4) seems to support this view because he stresses that:

Interviewing provides access to the context of the people’s behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behaviour. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning the people make of their experience affect the way they carry out that experience.

Kvale notes another important aspect, in addition to accepting the interviewee’s point of view. He stresses that that interview must be conducted with what he calls “deliberate naiveté.”(Kvale: 31). Here he explains that this is an attempt to gather descriptions of relevant themes of interviewee’s life world that are rich and presuppositionless. He advocates that the researcher does not have preformulated questions or carry ready made categories but rather becomes deliberately naïve in order to create an atmosphere of openness to new and unexpected phenomena.

Seidman (1991: 10) categorizes interviews into 3 types *viz*;

- Those that focus on the life history of the respondents.
- Those that focus on the details of experiences of the respondents within the context and
- Those that focus on reflections on meanings of experiences.

I have decided to combine all three types with special emphasis on reflections on meanings as important for the purpose of this study. I believe that respondents taking part in the research process will enrich the interview when the three categories become part of the process at Rocklands farm school. I believe that the context within which the respondents respond will be reflected by the inclusiveness of the categories.

At Rocklands as I require information on the role of the leader I need to look at this against the background of effective school. The respondents discuss their experiences with the leader and reflect on what the leader does or has done. This helps in throwing some light on the theoretical aspects of leadership and also assists the researcher to understand how leadership in Rocklands Farm School has evolved over years as it began to be experienced by the respondents (Seidman 1991: 11).

Reflections on meanings address the intellectual and emotional connections between participants' work and life, and as a result the researcher is able to obtain pertinent information on the leader's role. This enables the researcher to examine respondents' opinions and experiences against leadership literature. Denzin as quoted in Le Compte & Preissle (1993) sees three forms of interview, *viz*:

- The scheduled standardized interview
- The non-scheduled standardized interview and
- The non-standardized interview.

I believe that the semi-structured interview is in line with non-standardized interview as suggested by Denzin cited in Le Compte & Preissle, and it is the method I shall apply. It is described as:

...general questions to be addressed and new information desired by the researcher are anticipated but may be addressed during the interview informally in whatever order or context they happen to arise.

I decided to conduct interviews at times that would not interfere with the general running of the school. These times were restricted and that meant I had to use interviews of about 40 (forty) minutes per session. I adopted the three interview series suggested by Seidman.

I believed that the whole story of farm school activities of the principal would be told in this manner. The three series approach of interviews is argued by Seidman (1991: 19) for its appropriateness. He declares:

The structure of interviews, the passage of time over which they are conducted, the internal consistency, and the researcher's sense of discovery, lend authenticity to research and allow the researcher to have confidence in the validity ... [of the work].

Powney & Watts (1987: 35) caution the researcher against bias that creeps in and may distort the work produced in an interview. They note that bias starts at the time of interview process and continues through the analysis stages and that researchers have to acknowledge and be explicit about their own biases to counter the possibility of distortion. They identify areas within which bias may creep in as, for example, in the background characteristics of the researcher, psychological factors such as attitudes expectations and motives. There are also behavioural factors which may arise out of the circumstances in which the interview is done. Brenner as quoted in Powney & Watts (1987: 37) stresses the unavoidable existence of bias in interviews and says: "...to want to interview without interviewer influence is a contradiction in terms." This says that interviewer must be vigilant of his/her own perceptions as well as those of the interviewees as these may have a distorting influence on the outcomes of the interview.

### **3.4 RESEARCH SITE**

Rocklands farm school is about 18 kilometers west of Uitenhage direction not far from the Uitenhage-Humansdorp road. The school is located next to a tarred road that goes towards the mountainous western areas of a dairy farming community. The school is in the heart of a poultry farming community and other related activities. Signs of poverty can be observed from the shack dwellings and dilapidated buildings that are scattered around the school amid shrubs, bushes and tall bluegum trees. These houses serve as dwellings for farm labourers and their families. The reality of farm poverty has already been highlighted by Gaganakis and Crew (1987), Graaf in Unterhalter (1991) and Gordon (1987) and Hartshorne (1992).

Krause (1997) has noted that even the new Government since 1994 has had very little effect on the plight of rural schools and particularly farm schools. She points out that farm schools have remained isolated in terms of distance from financial and material resources for their well being. Hartshorne noted that constant demands for urban renewal and improvement continued to overshadow "...the need of these rural communities" (Hartshorne 1992: 140).

Rocklands Farm School boasts new building blocks that have been erected recently, and brings a striking contrast to its immediate surroundings. Older and dilapidated church buildings that are scattered around used to serve as the school earlier when it was still a primary school. The school has a principal, a deputy principal and 3 (three) Heads of different departments and a staff complement of 16 teachers. The school roll consists of 460 pupils from grade one to grade twelve. At lower classes there are multi-grade classes where one teacher handles two different classes. According to Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989: 13) the dismal environmental factors cannot completely deny the school the potential to succeed.

Rocklands Farm School produced good results for four consecutive years from 1998 to 2001 for its grade twelve learners. I have used Cohn and Rossmiller's (1987: 381) understanding of an effective school. They state that effective schools are defined, "primarily in terms of gains in cognitive knowledge rather than broader, more inclusive measures of outcomes of schooling." The Rocklands farm school's good performance is judged from the 100% pass rate of the grade twelve learners for the past four years.

I wish to highlight that the present Rocklands farm school is not different from any other farm school in as far as resources are concerned. It also has a serious transport problem such as confronts all farm schools in varying scales of intensity. This particular problem affects the whole staff and the learners equally and there does not seem to be any viable option on the table at the moment though attempts at addressing this problem are on-going. This impacts negatively on teaching time and the general administration of the school. Teachers engaged in Rocklands Farm School community do not reside in the area. They all commute from different areas like Port Elizabeth, which is 60 kilometers away, and Uitenhage, 18 kilometers from the school.

### 3.5 SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

This study is intended to gain more information about the leader of Rocklands farm school through the eyes of those who work close to the principal. It is also interesting to note that the school leader at Rocklands is a woman, something that is likely to add another dimension to my understanding of leadership. I have purposely selected respondents whom I regard as relevant to provide the kind of information I need for this research. The study is concerned with the principal's role. It seeks to establish through the respondents what they regard as important roles of the leader that might have led to a successful school. I believe that those selected in this manner will put in a persuasive voice on leadership roles and add value to the research question.

Patton (1990: 169) sees purposeful sampling in a qualitative research as appropriate if the research question is likely to benefit. He argues that:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

The respondents I have selected represent different members of the school community and their voice from their own perspectives within the farm school environment would hopefully give rich data for research. I have given preference to eight members of the school community because of their positions within the school structure, their experiences and information they are likely to possess and give (Huysamen 1994: 176).

The people to be interviewed are the following:

- A male learner leader
- A female learner leader
- An ordinary teacher
- A teacher serving in the school's SMT.

- A governing body parent representative
- The farm manager
- The Education Development Officer who is connected to the school and
- The principal

As stated earlier I believe that this represents a cross section of views, perceptions and ideas about the role of the principal and I believe that such a diverse approach to gathering information will give more insights into the leadership concept and leadership practices. Lincoln & Guba (1985: 201) stress that the object of purposeful sampling is not to focus on similarities that can be developed into generalizations but rather to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavour.

### **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The two methods of data gathering I shall be using, *viz;* participant observation and interviews have ethical implications that may pose a serious threat to the validity and reliability of the study. There has to be an entrance protocol that is observed to ensure that honesty becomes the norm of investigation. Powney & Watts (1987: 39) advocate honesty and stress that the researcher needs to be explicit about his intentions to gain the confidence of the respondents. I wrote a letter to the District Office of Education explaining what I intended doing and explaining my choice and what I hoped to achieve. On receiving positive feedback I wrote another letter of introduction as well as explanation of my intention to the principal of the school. The response from the school was positive but I was asked to come into a staff meeting and explain in detail what it was that I wanted to do, what it would mean to the school and what the implications were likely to be. Once again the issue of honesty had to play a major role as my entry into the school depended on my honest, upfront explanation of my work. This helped the teachers to gain confidence and accept me as a genuine person who had not come to confuse and mislead them.

Creswell (1994: 165) states that the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, value and desires of the informants. This is particularly so with participant

observation because it invades the life of informants which means that sensitive information can frequently be revealed. That is why it becomes necessary to reveal the intentions of the research and to ensure that proper permission has been granted.

As a participant observer I worked with the teachers and established a good rapport with the staff and the learners and was accepted as one of them without compromising my main objective as a researcher. Jorgensen (1989: 31) sees the establishment of rapport with participants as a critical factor because this would eventually make them feel at ease and that the deliberations with them must be judged to be morally acceptable. Powney & Watts warn that the involvement with the school community is likely to distort relations with the informants and the importance of keeping a vigilant eye cannot be taken slightly (Powney & Watts 1987: 41). When a conducive atmosphere has been cultivated, Cohen & Manion (2000: 350) see the importance of “informed consent” as the next step in which those who participate in the research do so willingly and voluntarily.

I developed confidence among the Rocklands people about what I was going to do so that when I gave them the power to choose, they themselves decided who was to participate in the interviews. I explained the importance of the information they were to give me but I also assured them that this would be done in strict confidence. Their information would only be for research purposes and their names would be protected. In other words I had to assure them of anonymity in as far as provision of information was concerned. I had also to assure them that the information they gave would not be used at any other stage for any other purpose other than for research. This established parameters of anonymity and confidentiality and allowed me to pursue the research with confidence (Cohen & Manion 1994: 354). It is noted also that the researcher should always be alert to a situation where the participants give what they think the researcher wants and therefore, may not assist in the validity and reliability of the research process. I believe the use of open-ended questions and in-depth probing strengthened the internal validity of this study. Since I presented no real agenda, it would not have been possible for respondents to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear.

During the interview process I had to ensure that the atmosphere was conducive to fruitful engagement. The interview had a tape recording facility and each respondent was

asked whether they were happy to accept the presence of such a facility. During my observation period I have recorded details related to my observation in a journal and also recorded my own thinking, feelings experiences and perceptions throughout the research process. I did this having made sure that the staff was aware of what I was doing and why I was doing it (Creswell 1994: 166).

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Bogdan & Biklen (1982: 154) describe data analysis as:

...working with data, organizing it, breaking it down, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is to be learnt and deciding what you tell others.

Jorgensen (1989: 107) seems to be in support of what Cantrell says because he explains in more detail that data analysis is:

...breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes.

Jorgensen goes on to explain that the aim of the process is to assemble or construct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion. In addition Yin (1994: 103) suggests strongly that the researcher must have a general analytical strategy because the ultimate goal is to treat the evidence fairly to produce compelling analytical conclusions and to rule out alternative interpretations. In support of this view Hart (1993) points out that data analysis allows the researcher to identify conversational patterns and observe connections among the experiences of the respondents. The discovery of these patterns offers the researcher alternatives to generalization.

Lincoln & Guba (1985: 203) stress the importance of data analysis because it makes sense of the field data. They say that data accumulated in the field must be analyzed inductively in order to define local working hypotheses or questions that can be followed up. They argue further to say that data analysis is aimed at uncovering embedded information and attempt at making it explicit through “unitizing and categorizing” efforts.

- **Unitizing.** This is a process of defining units, separating them along their boundaries and identifying them for subsequent analysis.
- **Categorizing.** This is a process whereby the previous unitized data are organized into categories that provide descriptive or inferential information about context or information.

It is my intention to follow the suggestions given here by Lincoln & Guba (1985) during the analysis process. I read and reread the interview data till a comprehensive picture of what the interview was about emerged in my mind from what the respondents were saying. The next step was to identify similar points, which became part of the unitizing process. Each segment and its meaning were grouped together to form categories. These categories described the actions of the principal. In turn these categories assisted in the emergence of themes which were born out of the interrelations of categories. Themes served here to identify some important features of the principal's role in the successful farm school.

I made an attempt to see the principal's actions as a reflection of the leader's engagement in the creation of effective school environment. I have referred to literature on effective schools to see whether the Rocklands farm school principal possesses the qualities identified with effective schools.

I used two methods, *viz*: participant observation and interviews to help gather the necessary data. The combination of these methods was intended to bring out persuasive arguments and positions on what the leader does. With participant observation data it is possible to verify or confirm the findings that have emerged in the interview process. I have been able therefore, to find a cross-reference and also note peculiarities or similarities within the phenomena that I have studied. This is a process of triangulation that eventually attempts to strengthen research validity and reliability.

The compelling reason to pursue the combination of methods in gathering information for this particular study is supported by Lin as quoted in Cohen *et al.* (2000: 114) in which he states:

Exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality [one is] investigating. [One] needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artifacts of one specific method of collection.

The notion of triangulation bears the possibility that the work is reliable and that the outcome would be of quality. The issues noted in one method may be strengthened if they get validation from another method (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 114). In addition Yin (1994) adds that the use of triangulation helps in the development of converging lines of inquiry and that the conclusions or findings are likely to be more convincing and accurate. He points out that this also helps in the reduction of construct validity. In support of this view Maxwell (1996: 76) says that the combination of interviews and participant observation enables the researcher to draw inferences about respondents' meanings and perspectives and this is something that would not have been possible if interviews were the only instrument of investigation. It is for that reason that the participant observation is used as a back-up method to strengthen or validate the issues identified during the interview sessions.

I have worked through the following procedures:

- Translation of interviews as they have been conducted in Xhosa.
- Transcription of the interviews
- Unitizing and categorizing
- Clustering and theme building
- Identifying themes and contextualization
- Respondents' double checking
- Triangulation process

These procedures are built from suggestions as quoted in Creswell (1994: 167) made by Schatzman and Straus (1973), Jacob (1987), Agar (1980), Merriam (1988).

### **3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

This is a case study research focusing on one school. The aim of this research is to discover “what is going on” and also to investigate why things are happening as they do (Yin: 1984: 14). One has to realize that in a case study analysis is not well formulated or is not cast in stone with the result that bias may creep in from time to time and distort the findings.

In this kind of research there is no generalization and the possibility, according to Winegardner (2001: 12) is that the findings could be exaggerated or oversimplified. This may lead to distortion or erroneous conclusions about the actual situation. Interviews tend to be unreliable because people say things they do not do or do things that are incompatible with what they say they do. The problem is also highlighted with participant observation where the researcher’s bias and perceptions may creep into the investigation and render the results suspect.

Translating the respondents’ data from their mother tongue into English is likely to reduce the impact of the meanings and nuances contained in the interviews but I am quite conversant with both languages so that I have been able to try and double check translation against the original scripts. I have also checked the accuracy of the interviews by referring areas of doubt to individuals concerned to ensure that the essence of what was meant was accurately captured.

I believe that the fact that the researcher has become aware of these limitations and is willing to make his intentions and actions explicit paves the way towards avoiding the distortion of facts which at the end may lead to erroneous findings.

### **3.9 SUMMARY**

I have shown that this study is conducted in an interpretive paradigm as an attempt to capture the rich detail of the lived world of the respondents. I have pointed out the significance of the interpretive orientation in the research I am conducting and how narrative description and interpretation thereof would form part of this research. I have argued for an interpretive orientation on the understanding that it would facilitate the maintenance of interaction with the respondents as they begin to make sense of their situation while at the same time they reflect on the meanings they attach to their actions.

I have argued for the interpretive paradigm because I am investigating issues relating to leadership and I have justified this approach by pointing out that dealing with experiences, attitudes, perceptions and biases require this paradigm so as to accommodate adequately the issues I have just mentioned. I have also shown that language is an important vehicle respondents use to interpret meanings in context. I have observed that this becomes more meaningful in leadership studies, where leadership knowledge and actions need to be explained and interpreted.

I have supported the use of a case study method in my investigation as appropriate because it helped in the understanding of human relations and it appreciates uniqueness and complexities of people within a given context. I found that a case study method would allow people to become active subjects who not only get affected by external and internal influences but are also able to influence these. This in turn makes people centres of meaningful actions and reactions.

I have shown that participant observation is one of the instruments used to gather information. It is able to allow me to see how events evolve over time and how respondents act and react in the course of events within a given context. The intention is to understand the phenomenon of my study in relation to “time and context that spawned, harboured and supported it” (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 189).

I have shown that interviews would be conducted not only to gain answers to simple questions but also to delve into issues during the two-way interaction and discussion with the view to gain better understanding of issues within the phenomenon that is studied. The semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to gain more meaningful information on the role of the principal. Eight people who represent the cross-section of the Rocklands school community are interviewed so that they could provide the information needed in discussing the role of the principal in an academically successful farm school.

I have noted that ethical considerations have been accommodated to ensure that the research is conducted honestly and that respect for persons is an overriding consideration. Interviews and participant observations have been conducted with due consideration to respondents' rights as well as their rights within the "informed consent" practice (Cohen and Manion 200: 350).

Data analysis and discussion has followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985: 203) suggestions of unitizing and categorizing. I have done this after a thorough understanding of the interview content. Discussion and analysis have followed with special emphasis on defining the role of the principal in an academically successful farm school. Participant observation reports have helped in the strengthening or validating the categories and themes identified in the interviews.

Themes have served to summarize the categories and to highlight the important features of the principal's role in this particular farm school. I have done this by making cross-references to the school effectiveness literature to determine the extent to which the principal's role account for school success.

The next chapter presents the data collected from interviews.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA**

In this chapter I present the ideas, views and perceptions of respondents in an attempt to bring to light the meanings embodied in the research questions. The research question seeks to understand the role of the principal in an academically successful farm school. My approach is to present these ideas and perceptions as they have emerged from the semi-structured interviews I conducted with 8 respondents. In line with Seidman's suggestion I have purposely selected these 8 people because they satisfy the sufficiency and saturation criteria for the required information (Seidman 1991: 45). I do not report on observation data in this chapter: rather, observation data are used to enhance the findings as presented in themes in Chapter 5.

The presentation is in the narrative convention and includes varying use of long or short text-embedded quotes as the narrative unfolds to describe the roles of the principal (Cresswell 1994: 160). I am aware that this kind of presentation may carry with it a de-contextualisation of data as it appeared in the original social encounter of the interview process. Cohen *et al.* (2000: 28) argue that in data processing and analysis there is great tension between maintaining a sense of the holism of the interview and the tendency for analysis (process) to atomize and fragment the data. This separates the data into constituents elements and somewhat loses the synergy of the whole. I have carefully ensured that the quotation taken from the text do so in support of the categories that have emerged from the interviews but are as far as possible not lost in the context from which they are taken.

The major task is to gain the respondents' views on the principal's role and on how these roles have impacted on the overall performance of the farm school. The presentation of data serves as a first step in the analysis process but the attempt here is to put the data in perspective as it has formed categories of actions by the principal. They have a common base that puts them into different groups but are also able to pass for other categories depending on the context of the discussion.

## **4.1 THE RESPONDENTS**

In line with the ethnographic tradition I have used pseudonyms for the 8 respondents in order to comply with anonymity and confidentiality understandings. The names used in most cases closely resemble their location in the school scenario. The 8 respondents are as follows:

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. <b>Parental Representative:</b>       | <b>Mr John</b>        |
| 2. <b>Male Learner Representative:</b>   | <b>Big Boy</b>        |
| 3. <b>School Management Team member:</b> | <b>Miss Smate</b>     |
| 4. <b>Female Learner Representative:</b> | <b>Girlsie</b>        |
| 5. <b>Teacher Representative:</b>        | <b>Miss Terry</b>     |
| 6. <b>Farm manager:</b>                  | <b>Mr Charliwood</b>  |
| 7. <b>Education Development Officer:</b> | <b>Miss Inspector</b> |
| 8. <b>The principal:</b>                 | <b>Miss Tops</b>      |

The eight people from Rocklands Farm School community have been purposely selected because they represent the different aspects of the school environment and presenting varying perspective on the role of the principal.

### **4.1.1 THE RESPONDENTS' PROFILE**

#### **4.1.1.1 MR JOHN: SCHOOL GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON**

Mr John is a man who has been linked to the school over the past twenty years, during most of which he has been a governing council member. He has been the chairperson of the school governing body for the past 8 years. He is 67 years of age and retired from active farming in 2002. He now has free time and is able to visit the school any time of the day to check on what goes on and to offer assistance whenever it is needed. He stays about 400 meters away from school in a three-roomed house that has a zinc and iron extension serving as a storeroom. He attended school up to standard two around 1947 and could be regarded according to the literacy standards, as illiterate.

#### **4.1.1.2 BIG BOY: LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER**

Big Boy is a male learner who is the chairperson of the Representative council of learners. He has been at the school since standard 4 in 1997 and is now doing his Matric. He comes from KwaNobuhle Township in Uitenhage and he commutes daily to the school. He hopes to pass at the end of the year because of the tuition he got from this school. He joined Rocklands Farm school because his parents were unhappy with the way he was taught in his township school. He is 19 years of age and aims to pursue medicine or chemical engineering studies when he leaves Rocklands.

He appears neat and attends school regularly. He has seldom called a learners' council meeting for the whole school because he does not have time for these as his books are more important to him but he consults with his council from time to time for updates.

#### **4.1.1.3 MISS SMATE: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBER**

Miss Smate is the HOD for science at the school. She came in 1999 as a redeployed teacher from Kliplaat Primary School. She has 8 years of teaching experience and likes to teach maths and science because these subjects are her speciality. At Rocklands Miss Smate teaches Maths to lower grades in the secondary section and Biology to the grade twelve group. She came into the school as an HOD and was therefore an additional post to augment the management team.

Miss Smate takes responsibility for the school's timetable arrangement and morning assemblies. She is part of the bereavement committee and the sports committee. She also assists in the monitoring process of the continuous assessment of learners. She is qualified as a teacher with an M + 3 entrance requirement.

#### **4.1.1.4 GIRLSIE: FEMALE LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE**

Girlsie a female learner who is in grade twelve. She is 20 years old and like her male counterpart, comes from Kwanobuhle township of Uitenhage. She joined the school in

2000 in grade 9. She is the vice-chairperson of the representative council of learners. She left her previous school because she became unhappy with the way the school was run and was also unhappy with the way many students behaved at that school. Her parents advised her to go to Rocklands because there was order and good teaching. She is hoping to pass at the end of the year and intends pursuing a nursing career.

Girlsie is involved in volleyball and music but realizes that sport for grade twelve should be at a minimum because the important thing is passing matric. She does not attend or convene meetings for learners because there are no burning issues and she prefers that everyone should concentrate on studying.

#### **4.1.1.5 MISS TERRY: TEACHER REPRESENTATIVE**

Miss Terry is a redeployed teacher who arrived in Rocklands in 1999. She taught in a secondary school in the King Williams Town District as from 1992 and has now completed 10 years teaching experience. She teaches Languages, History and Geography in the secondary section of the school. She joined Rocklands farm school for the first time in 1999 though she came from a rural homeland environment.

Miss Terry looks after punctuality, the entertainment committee and general cleanliness of the learners and the school. She is also responsible for her own class as a class teacher and manages learners in her class. She is a qualified teacher with an M + 4 entrance requirement and is privately studying for an Honours degree.

#### **4.1.1.6 MR CHARLIWOOD: FARM MANAGER**

Mr Charliwood is a retired farm owner and manager who has been in the poultry business for over 35 years. The farm has been in the family since the turn of the last century while the poultry business has been thriving for the past 60 years. He now stays in Port Elizabeth but is still linked to some business ventures as director or trustee. In addition to the poultry industry he had additional dairy farming activities and a little cattle farming. All these activities were carried out at the same time at the Rocklands farm area.

Mr Charliwood has left a relative as manager at Rocklands and keeps a very low profile on farming activities. He has been actively linked to the development of the school since 1978 when he became the manager of the school. He became actively involved in the 80s when the plight of school came to prominence. He was also encouraged by a teacher who continued to seek his assistance. This teacher eventually became principal of the same school in 1994.

#### **4.1.1.7 MISS INSPECTOR: EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

Miss Inspector has just been confirmed as an inspector or Education Development Officer but she has been acting in the position for the past two and a half years. She has been a subject adviser on remedial work for the Department for the past seven years and has been based in the Department of Education offices all these years. When she was made a subject adviser she had been a teacher in a primary school for eleven years.

She has an M + 4 qualification and she is now reading for her Honours degree with a university and is pursuing special needs area for learners. She has been looking after Rocklands as a subject adviser because it fell within the group she was required to support. When she became an EDO she also took over Rocklands from a previous male EDO who had been allocated new areas. Miss Inspector represents the Department of Education at that school and she liaises with the school and the Department on all matters

affecting the school. She also advises teachers and the principal on relevant issues when and if these arise.

#### **4.1.1.8 MISS TOPS: THE PRINCIPAL**

Miss Tops has been with this school for the past 19 years. She started her teaching career in 1972 and came to Rocklands for the first time in 1984 as an ordinary teacher. Then in 1993 Miss Tops was made a principal of Rocklands farm school which went up to standard 5. She is married to a businessman who runs buses and taxis and these vehicles have featured prominently in her school administration.

Miss Tops qualified as a teacher in 1971 and subsequently studied while doing her teaching. She left Rocklands in 1979 on study leave and came back in 1984 armed with a Diploma and a Degree qualification. She stays in Kwanobuhle township of Uitenhage and she commutes daily to the school.

## **4.2 DATA PRESENTATION**

I present data in a categorized form. I must admit here that this presentation is not completely divorced from the whole analysis process because these occur simultaneously. It is also my intention to include a contextualisation strategy, because the purpose is to understand the data in context (Maxwell 1996: 79). I want to move on and work on connections between categories and development of themes as these will provide a well-grounded account. Presentation of data is a first step of the discussion and analysis is in line with Patton's suggestion (1980: 375). He points out that description can be separated from interpretation because it comes first. He says that the discipline and rigour of qualitative analysis depends on presenting solid descriptive data or what is often called 'thick description.' This should be done in such a way that others reading the results can understand and draw their own conclusions.

I have noted also that Creswell (1994: 153) points out that analysis is eclectic. The process is appropriate as long as it develops categories while it allows the researcher to

be open to other possibilities and contrary views. In order to properly arrange the developing issues and to ensure that the voluminous work is systematically ordered I have found it appropriate to present the data as the first step of the analysis process (Patton 1980: 297).

The presentation is interpretive and work will be communicated holistically by constantly quoting the voices of the respondents. Patton (1990: 430) regards this approach as appropriate because it provides thick description and becomes an important ingredient of qualitative inquiry. In this way I shall be providing a lens through which the informants can be viewed (Cresswell 1994). I provide here ideas, views perceptions and experiences of respondents in an attempt to answer the research questions. What is expressed about the role of the principal is done from the respondents' point of view.

I present categories that have been built up from unitizing processes and these have led to the establishment of these categories. I am aware of what Tesch as quoted in Creswell (1994: 154) says about this kind of presentation. He points out that the information by the respondents will be subject to a process of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation as I develop the categories which lead to the emergence of themes. I have indicated in chapter 3 that I shall be using procedures suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) in the unitizing and categorizing processes.

My research seeks to know the role of the principal in a successful farm school. It also seeks to know conditions in the school that community members believe to be conducive to good performance. I am guided by these questions in the development of the categories that I have seen emerging. The two issues I have raised are not mutually exclusive and the second part, *i.e.* conditions in the school, will mostly continue to be inferred from the first question in most cases.

The following categories are presented:

- The principal is not intimidated, is assertive and has initiative
- The principal is co-operative

- The principal works hard and is very active
- The principal is orderly and has care
- The principal is charismatic
- The principal is a motivator and is transformational
- The principal engages in problem-solving activities
- The principal creates good working relations
- The principal is very strong and autocratic

It is important to note that these categories attempt to describe the principal's role or what the principal does at that school. The categories will be reduced at the analysis stage to themes that will constitute the role of the principal as well as point to conditions conducive to the successful management of Rocklands.

#### **4.2.1 The Principal is not intimidated, is assertive and has initiative**

The most important observation by respondents was that the principal was able to perform a variety functions for Rocklands Farm School community because she was not intimidated by anything. She was bold and this quality went hand in hand with assertiveness and the ability to take initiative in all spheres of leadership and management. She does not recoil from Departmental officials, from farm managers, from parents or teachers. If she has made up her mind to do something she does it thoroughly with enthusiasm. Miss Inspector makes an important observation in this regard. She says:

Firstly, she is not intimidated. If she wants to go out and venture into new territory, whether the outcome is not going to be good, she says to herself, "I am going to try."

Mr Charliwood confirms this view:

...The kids were doing something 'illegal'. We were not supposed to have Matric at the school. I think that Treasure [Name of Principal] was very very motivated and wanted to make sure that the results that came out were very good.

Mr Charliwood points out the combination of these qualities as they continued to sustain the school and eventually brought in good results. He continues:

She was very hard working. She was not scared to work. ...When they started moving teachers around, they [Department of Education] said, “ you will take this, you will take that” and she said, “No, I will decide who to take on and who I do not take on.”

The principal is shown by the respondents as a very determined person who wants to do things in her own way and is prepared to challenge the Department of Education on some of the issues and decisions the Department makes. Mr. Charliwood continues to stress the point:

She stood her ground. ...She told me that there were lots of teachers and principals in Uitenhage area who were against her. I think there was a lot of jealousy. But she was a person who stood her ground.

The position of the principal’s boldness, her lack of fear and determination can be read from Miss Smate’s description:

The principal has developed a good way of defending herself so that anything directed at her is defended.

She goes on to explain the fact that the principal is not daunted by anything

She is very strong and is very much capable.

There is also an admission by Miss Smate that the strength of the principal may have intimidated other teachers at the school. She makes an observation:

The other thing here is that teachers have been very docile and accepting everything. What the principal says is what the principal gets.

The boldness of the principal is also confirmed by Mr John the Governing body representative. He cites a potential crisis at the school that was amicably resolved through the principal’s efforts. This happened when learners fought and the victim lost a couple of teeth when a school bell was used as a weapon. He notes what the principal did:

I came together with Tshawe and we found that the principal was handling the issue very well indeed. She even dealt with the police so that by the time we came they had already left the scene.

These are some of the pointers to the principal's assertiveness, her initiative and lack of fear in tackling issues that affect her school.

Miss Terry seems to confirm the principal's boldness and lack of fear in executing her duties. Teachers are brought down to size or they are too timid to confront the principal. She points out:

They (teachers) seem afraid to confront the principal on any issue. If the principal orders they just do. Funny how, when we have discussions among ourselves just as teachers, we would all agree that the principal needs to change certain ways of doing things. But when it comes to the crunch everybody just backs down.

The next category that emerged from the data was the principal's co-operative spirit which has opened many opportunities and opened many doors for successful academic work.

#### **4.2.2 THE PRINCIPAL IS CO-OPERATIVE**

The respondents have noted that the principal is co-operative with all the people she comes into contact with. Miss Inspector notes:

One of the things I picked up from her (the principal) is that she makes use of people. She does not entertain the idea that people may be stupid or unskilled.

Mr. Charliwood confirms this co-operative spirit as he has observed the principal working tirelessly against odds with the staff.

It was a team effort. ...They were doing something basically illegal. ...Treasure was very motivated and wanted to make sure that the results

that came out were very good. I think it was after the first election...that's when the first class wrote Matric. The discipline was something unbelievable. Those kids were so keen, they would come in during holidays. All teachers ...they came in... holiday time or not. They pushed on.

The activities described by Mr. Charliwood indicate the ability of the principal to work with others to ensure good school management and good learner support as well as the willingness of teachers to go the extra mile. The co-operative spirit is seen by Miss Terry as a consequence of team effort. She explains:

She is good, good at being influential, that's what. She is able to bring fresh ideas and we accept them with the intention of implementing them. When we finally do things, things change for the better, you see.

It is the willingness to co-operate that the respondents regard as good for the school. The co-operative spirit is captured by Mr John who noted that the new principal was looking for assistance so that she could tackle issues with confidence. This would help the principal see her school grow. He explains:

Many times we had to meet at school at night when we came back from work. We met the principal here at school. We would tackle issues and give our views. She would deal with these decisions diligently. At that time she had an assistance from another lady who came from a deregistered farm school called Waverly Hills and helped the new principal cope with the new demands. These two ladies did a marvelous job together, assisting each other in strategising and solving problems. The school grew in stature as a result.

The co-operation of the principal with the governing body has also helped in improving the image of the school and its future looked bright. Mr John explains:

Our way of doing things here is that we do not want things to degenerate. The principal is very sensitive. We do not want to do things on our own without involving the principal.

There is co-operation between teachers, learners and principal and Big Boy observes that this breeds a good spirit. He states:

It was easy for me to decide not to go to school in the township schools when I felt not like going. But here you just don't do that! You don't dare. Here teachers and the principal push us to do our best. You grow to enjoy this undivided attention we get here. So,

you actually look forward to coming to school every day.

Another important element of the principal's co-operative stance was the establishment of good links with feeder schools and also an attempt she made to keep them properly informed of Rocklands developments. Miss Tops explains:

That man, Mr Charliwood went out of his way to help us build more classrooms. I remember in 1996 that he built for us two classrooms. I think he was doing this to motivate us. I made sure that this information filtered to feeder schools so that farm learners would come to Rocklands and leave armed with a standard ten certificate. There were feeder schools such as Gumsdale, Waverly Hills, Thornhill, Woodridge, Seaview, Southern Side, Van Stadens and Wedgewood. All these schools were given first preference when admissions were underway.

Another fact has emerged from the data that the principal is a hard worker and is always at work. She has been identified as an active person who is always on the move to improve conditions in her school.

### **4.2.3 THE PRINCIPAL WORKS HARD AND IS VERY ACTIVE**

The respondents have identified that the principal is not only working hard but is also very active in her leadership in ensuring that good work was done by teachers and that learners were given ample opportunity to learn within a school environment. These two attributes are seen by respondents as pointers to good discipline and progress. Miss Inspector stresses the point.

She is very active... She has a good approach. She calls on people and makes use of them as resources. It is because she can...eh... she can make people grow and allow this to happen within her school. This in essence moved her school from grade 7 to where the school is today, grade twelve.

The hard working stance of the principal is confirmed by Girlsie.

I like the fact that she is a teacher as well and she does that very well.

Big Boy makes the point explicit that the principal teaches very well.

No old man, let me just say that Miss Vika does her bit in teaching in order for us to understand. The principal also teaches us Biology and she does that very well. In my opinion it is this teacher and the principal that teach Biology very well.

The fact that the principal is active seems to have rubbed off on to the teachers as well because Big Boy notes:

We are very happy with the [school] activities. If there is not enough time some teachers and the principal even use weekends to catch up on lost time.

Miss Inspector confirms that the work of the principal shows her as a hard worker and active participant in the progress the school is making. She says:

If you find her at school, she is always in classes because she wants to see... to see that...eh...what is happening or that there is progress. She also deals with critical subjects and has a meticulous eye on those subjects. She has gone out to teach these critical subjects up to grade twelve.

Mr Charliwood has found that the principal's hard work has ensured the school's ability to succeed as well as a general success of the whole school organization. He notes:

But she was a person who stood her ground and she was a leader. She stood by her principles. Yes, yes I think you must realize that in any business whether it is sport or education the person on top has got to be a leader. It's no use just putting in someone because he has some fancy Degree.

Another important point is that the school has been able to tour and win tournaments because of the principal's involvement. Miss Tops explains:

...we continued and sport became very important in the lives of learners in a farming environment so much so that that I was overjoyed by the arrival of more teachers especially the addition of two male teachers. We went on with extra-mural activities. These were now enjoying proper attention particularly music and sport. We were now going into far away places we never went to before like Durban, Bethlehem, etc.

In various instances the principal has shown her active participation and her hard work

and this is reflected by other categories. These overlapping categories are highlighted at the end of this chapter. One other important issue raised by respondents is the principal's show of care and her orderly behaviour in the execution of her duties.

#### **4.2.4 THE PRINCIPAL IS ORDERLY AND HAS CARE**

Mr John looks at the effort the principal makes to show her caring attitude but at the same time ensuring that there is no disorder in her way of running the school affairs. He states:

You see, at the time when this school enjoyed 100% pass, this principal used to sleep here at school with these learners especially when time was close to examination time. She would sleep here with them. She would bring pots, food and ensure that pupils were studying and being taught at the same time.

There was a case of a learner who had to go through a disciplinary process but the principal showed that even in this serious case she cared. Mr Charliwood confirms.

Yes we tried all means possible to try and rehabilitate this young man and the principal was very supportive.

Order in the school comes via what the principal does and the reaction there from. This is stated by Girlsie clearly:

This [order] is due to the principal's principles and hard work. Learners respect and listen to her.

She continues to stress the importance of orderliness as this will enhance the prestige of the school and make it attractive. She notes:

It is the way learning is handled. It is well planned unlike in in the township schools. For example, at the township school school if you write a test in the morning you leave for home thereafter but here you stay and continue learning until the school is over at normal time. There is no wasting of time here, no free lessons!

The matter is viewed by Miss Smate as a strict routine of following instructions. She notes that the teachers assist in the orderly management of the school by compliance.

All they (teachers) do is to receive strict instructions from the principal and they do as they are instructed.

Big Boy sums up the principal's care and that of teachers at Rocklands:

We are being cared for here, old man, really being cared for by our teachers and the principal.

Care for learners and a strong belief in orderly school activities is contained in what Big Boy illustrates in comparison to township school where he originally comes from:

Yes old man. The difference is more when you come from township schools. Here there is no time wasting. You also get to make the comparison of the present set up and the situation you were in before in the township school. There is also that thing that tells you to change and push harder and study seriously.

Order is also confirmed by Miss Terry and this encompasses all issues that make the school effective, attractive and worth all the efforts teachers and the principal put behind it. Miss Terry goes on:

For my first few months I was impressed, afraid and feeling small, you know. I noticed that people here enjoy their work and they work very hard. Looking at the school as a whole, looking at the classes there are charts, maps posters and general teaching aids. This showed that teachers and the principal are dedicated to their work.

It looks as though the principal's work continues to inspire both teachers and the learners to the extent that some descriptions they have given befit a charismatic leader. I have highlighted some descriptions of what the principal does and categorize them under charismatic leadership.

#### **4.2.5 THE PRINCIPAL IS CHARISMATIC**

I have decided to bring this concept into sharp focus because some of the explanations made by respondents describe actions of a charismatic leader. I have decided to cite these

qualities because they keep on emerging from the data and my observations have highlighted some important elements of charisma. Charismatic leadership will be understood to embody some of these criteria (Adapted from Sergiovanni 2001):

- The ability to challenge the *status quo*.
- The willingness to take personal risks
- Incur costs to self for the organization
- Make self-sacrifice and
- Ability to act in an unconventional way.

Miss Inspector makes note of important actions taken by the principal that describe her charismatic inclinations:

What I have noticed from her is that ...is that ...what has continued to make her successful is her approach to issues. She did not attach too much importance to herself as a principal. She goes down to the lower levels you know. She used to sleep with the grade twelve group.

This would be regarded as unusual way of dealing with teaching issues. This unconventional approach at achieving her aims is elaborated on by Miss Inspector. She says:

Yes, yes she does things differently. She deviates from the norm at times.

The principal's capacity to deviate from the norm is also elaborated on further by the observation made by Miss Inspector in the unending transport problem. She states:

But the principal wanted children to be at school you see. She used her own transport, her own combi's for transporting these children. She was trying to meet these parents halfway. Some parents, despite that assistance, were not even contributing to the principal's incurred costs in transporting their children.

Big Boy also voices appreciation of the principal's special gift because she goes out of her way to ensure success of the school encounter. Big Boy also supports what Miss Inspector said. She states:

I know that she teaches well. When the year comes to an end, the principal would keep the matriculants at school, teaching them and even allow those who stay far away from school to sleep over at school. She is able to do anything and when she does it she does it well. For example...she...she... did something very well last year. When a Biology teacher had a problem during the year (2000) she took over the class and taught the standard ten Biology very well.

It does appear that the principal stretches herself to the limit at times for the sake of the learners and her bid to have a well deserving school within a farming community. Mr John notices this willingness to perform well and capacity to sacrifice time and energy for the school. He describes the principal this way:

Despite her strength and toughness, she has vision. She is not only tough, she has also mercy in abundance. She has a foresight and is able to rescue a desperate situation when need arises

People with special gifts fit into this kind of description. The principal's approach to crises is seen by Mr John as unconventional at times. He points this out:

Sometimes as a Governing body we may be handling a disciplinary issue. Yet we may discover that the principal has quietly dealt with it before it could come to our meetings for further discussion. She would make things easy by submitting findings or recommendations for us to act upon.

Mr Charliwood accentuates the principal's charismatic tendencies by observing some of the actions and approaches to work that she has adopted. He notes:

She was very hard working. She was not scared to work. She was a leader ...eh ... teachers who have worked with her ... they adored her. They could do anything for her.

In other words, she almost has "supernatural powers" or special gifts that put her in a different position from ordinary leaders. This is observed by Mr Charliwood in that teachers could do anything for her. I have already dealt with the principal's unconventional approach in dealing with problems confronting her administration and how these approaches have in fact enabled her school to overcome the difficulties. She would ignore protocol in pursuit of what she regards as necessary. Mr John narrates a story of how they were able to get permission to continue with upgrading process despite

very fierce opposition from some members of the Department of Education. Mr John explains:

Yes, on this day after a frustrating discussion with two coloured officials the principal looked for Mr Peppeta but soon discovered that he was absent from work and she eventually found the top man. She talked with the District manager and they came down together and met with the Coloured officials. After a while the manager instructed the Coloured officials to carry out and fill in the approval documents. These officials were of the opinion that our school should join the Ankervas primary school and therefore dissolve as a school.

Miss Terry notes that the principal's unorthodox approach sometimes seems to encroach on democratic ways of leadership. What happens is that the voice of the principal supercedes other voices within the school organization. She expresses her displeasure:

Firstly, at this school you have to understand that we have difficulties making decisions or coming up with suggestions. It is always left up to the principal. But I guess that it is how things are done here because even if you suggest something and everyone agrees, the next thing you will hear is that the principal has changed the decision at the next meeting.

The respondents continued to build on the increasing stature of the role the principal played in the development of the school. Besides the charismatic characteristics I have highlighted here there also emerged the category of a motivator and transformational leader who has made sure that the school changes from what it was when she started as a principal to a well known good secondary school among farming communities.

#### **4.2.6 THE PRINCIPAL IS A MOTIVATOR AND A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER**

There has been a strong linkage between these two elements. The respondents have found that the principal goes out of her way to motivate everybody for the achievement of better results. She is capable of talking convincingly so that others may respond positively. On the other hand as a transformational leader the respondents have made inferences about her transformational qualities. These two elements are interrelated in the data as I intend to show here. This is similar to what I have shown about the charismatic leader. The

respondents identified actions that I have categorized as charismatic. The descriptions by respondents of a transformational leader correspond with what is known in transformational leadership literature. Respondents have described their principal in such a way that the transformational qualities have been captured. It is generally accepted that transformational leaders are motivated and also motivate their followers to pursue ideals that are beneficial to the community without any self interest. The activities Miss Tops engaged herself in point to her willingness to change a bad situation for the better even long before she became a principal of Rocklands intermediate school. She explains her intention to change the situation:

I decided that we needed to make a move towards changing the dull nature of the school. At that time there were four of us plus the principal.

Her determination to ensure that there was transformation is strengthened further by her statements.

Sir, when I arrived as a principal I found ...I ... I ...found a very poor school. I think that the enrolment was 90+- of learners, yet when I left for my studies earlier the school stood at 200+.

She explains further the developments that took place under her leadership.

I came in as a new principal and I had in mind eh... ..eh ...I had in mind that Mr Charliwood was still a farm manager and I knew that he had some fresh ideas about my school. I also felt that the school could not stagnate at standard 5. I decided to change the scenario by introducing secondary level in a gradual manner till the school reached grade twelve.

Two features, viz, that of causing things to happen and willingness of followers to help, have been identified by Miss Inspector as crucial for the progress of the school. She points out:

What she used to do was ...eh ...was ...she never told teachers what to do or how things are to be done. She initiates things so that others may follow you see. People and teachers had to look up to her as a role model.

Mr Charliwood on the other hand concentrated on attempts to change the education system and also changing the school curriculum for the benefit of the farm school children. He felt obliged to give a helping hand so that transformational objectives may be realized. He argued:

Well you know, ...eh ... if the country is to succeed, we need to start with the children first. There ...eh ... was education ...eh ...apartheid years. It was not what it should have been. There were various subjects left out so that the black farming population could not get into certain jobs because they did not know. I realized that if I still stay in this country, and I love this country, I have got to put in my little bit to help the principal change the situation.

The principal's desire for better schooling has enabled her to come up with plans unheard of in the farming community and even among township schools. The fact that she could organize the grade twelve group to come to school and sleep over so that more lessons can be conducted implies a good groundwork with the parents and teachers. Mr John noted that this exercise was not only motivational but was at the same time transformational. He explains:

They were to learn and study together. We used the classes and this office for that specific purpose. She arranged that girls would have their separate section when preparing to sleep and the boys would have theirs. Then she would make groups with leaders for each group to assist her in managing all groups. She would take them for an excursion after an intensive weekend of tuition. They would go to such places as Humewood, Culturama, etc. as motivation.

Mr. Charliwood had earlier explained that the principal was very motivated and had to work very hard to obtain good results. Miss Tops corroborates Mr Charliwood's observation:

Now we worked very hard because we had standard ten sir. I had in mind that I had to fulfill the dreams and wishes of Rocklands parents and the wishes of the farm manager. That man went out of his way to help us in any way he saw appropriate. I remember that in 1996 he built for us two classrooms.

Miss Tops highlights the earlier struggles she was engaged in order to change the situation. She points out:

I decided that we were going to try and do something with the few teachers I had at my disposal. I went on with these teachers and the majority of standard eight learners. Then I had to apply for standard nine classes. I also experienced the same problem. There was no reply from the Department of Education.

The fact that the principal had a spirit of motivating others for the desired change is confirmed by Miss Inspector when she says:

Ja! Things at that school used to go in a certain way. The new teacher came in to test the old practices at this school; like checking if the grade 12 group was not cheating. This new teacher came with a different attitude but you know what! The principal never mentioned the fact that things were being made difficult for her

The inference here is that the principal would not be diverted from the course she had chosen for the school and she looked prepared to keep the momentum going despite distractions that kept on appearing, an example of which was the arrival of a suspicious teacher. Another important aspect is that the principal talked to various people to highlight the plight of the school so that those who could were able to assist in cash or in kind. Miss Inspector confirms this.

She laughed at me when I asked her how she got into the overseas help. She said to me that she simply wrote letters after she had thought things through. I don't remember whom she met. But in this case she talked to people and the matter ended with people realizing that Rocklands was a school in need.

The enthusiasm and optimism of the principal urged her on even on the vexing problem of transport. She wanted to see a solution arrived at and made a move that changed the situation. Miss Inspector reports:

Ja! So what happened was that the principal, due to the failure by parents was prepared to transport these children. Some of the transport providers had costs that the parents could not afford.

Another important aspect that Miss Tops emphasizes is the high level of motivation that she finds in the learners. This is something that also encourages her to go on. She explains:

So we did not only got to study at school, we could also go out ...we would work ...we ... we... this was happening because learners were also keen and interested in what was going on. They did not make my life difficult and possibly that is the reason we got 100% pass rate. We even organized a farewell function for them as another way of motivation.

The respondents have noted the attempts by the principal to solve problems in Rocklands farm school. Various attempts, some of which I have already mentioned under different categories, show the resolve of the principal in transforming the situation by providing solutions to problems.

#### **4.2.7 THE PRINCIPAL ENGAGES IN PROBLEM-SOLVING ACTIVITIES**

In farm schools transport is one of the most serious problems because learners have to travel through open spaces and long distances to school. There is no reliable transport to take these scattered learners to and from school. Miss Inspector states a way towards solution:

She used her own transport, her own combi's to transport these children.

The principal's determination to solve problems is also captured by Mr John's observation of what she did when there were crises or administrative difficulties. He sums up the principal's outlook:

We were getting rid of wayward tendencies ...so that a person may be on the right track. But all this depended on the principal, who was sensitive.

Mr John continues the praise the approach of the principal in ensuring that problems were solved as soon as possible. He explains:

Sometimes we were able to find that the principal and the staff have dealt with some disciplinary problems before they come to us.

Another important strategic planning that helped to solve poor attendance by parents in meetings had the principal with the Governing body working on an innovative plan to overcome the problem. Mr John explains:

The principal carried us through. We even decided to break up parents for meetings purposes. Those parents for example, who stayed in Uitenhage would be visited by the Governing committee to hold meetings with them and the principal.

Mr John who says that the principal was at hand to assist in changing the child's behaviour highlights the problem of a delinquent child:

We tried all means possible to rehabilitate this young man but the principal was at hand to help and support us.

The same hand of help is shown by the principal's quest for restoration of discipline when she proactively engages in solving a problem at her school. Mr John explains:

We came together with Tshawe and we found that the principal was handling the issue very well indeed. She even dealt with the Police so that by the time we came they had already left the scene.

Mr John also notes that the redeployment brought difficulties for the principal as she was losing a key teacher. She confronted the problem and eventually succeeded. He explains this way:

We were ready to release her [teacher] but a lot was done by the principal to try to retain the teacher. The effort succeeded. That is why the teacher is still here.

Big Boy has noted that that sporting and cultural activities tended to infringe on teaching time and this meant that learners would fall behind. He noted that the principal brought in a solution.

Yes, may be ...may be we are away on a sporting activity the principal would ensure that when we come back we always try and catch up with the rest of our classmates.

The principal addresses problems in the academic area in different ways. One method is to involve herself to make sure that solution is found. Big Boy narrates a troubling story.

...We have not been taught Biology for some time by one teacher when the principal decided to take over and teach us. The principal now teaches us Biology and she is doing that very well. In my opinion it is only the principal this other teacher I have mentioned that teach Biology very well. The rest should not be allowed to teach Biology at all.

Girlsie also makes a point that shows that the principal is keen on ensuring that things are running smoothly. She says:

The principal is all right. She is really nice and likes to be in control of matters.

The inference is that people who want to be in control want to ensure that problems are solved and that the school organization runs smoothly. For such a person to succeed there is another dimension that Big Boy brings to the fore.

She [Principal] has principles and she enforces rules. Her rules are meaningful even outside the school.

Like all schools there are other learner problems that confront the school but the principal and the teachers are working hard to normalize the school despite these. Girlsie explains:

You know teachers and principal here go out of their way to make our lives easier and I think we owe them the respect they deserve.

The principal was also motivated by the plight she saw of learners who had nowhere to go since their school had limited curriculum. She saw the poor life cycle and wanted to do something about it. Miss Tops explains:

...Another thing that worried me a great deal was to find out that the majority of learners who were at our school when I left for my studies were now loitering the dirty streets of Rocklands and some girls had fallen pregnant.

She continued to make observations about the unpleasant nature of the farm school:

They only pass standard 5 in Rocklands and ...and ... some few lucky ones go to an urban environment and ...and ... These schools place a huge financial burden on farm parents. The other thing is that some learners end up ...end up dropping out of school.

Miss Tops continues to defend motivational approach among learners.

I tried to work very hard for the sake of my learners. I decided to motivate them and as a result, we did all that was possible as we used to do before. The learners also in turn, resolved that they were not going to start the slide to mediocrity. So we worked together and they were able to obtain 100% pass for year 2000.

Respondents have noted the principal's willingness to give good working relations advice because this forms part of good management and enhances trust among all stakeholders.

#### **4.2.8 THE PRINCIPAL CREATES GOOD WORKING RELATIONS**

It appears from the respondents that problems faced at various stages of the school's development were solved partly because of the principal's ability to create good working relations. Mr Charliwood notes:

...When we got to a stage where at the end of standard 8 the Education Department said no ways were we going to further than standard 8, Treasure [Principal] came to tell me. I ... I ... said, "Forget it! Keep going I will support you."

Mr Charliwood realizes that the successful struggles of this farm school were due to co-operation and good human relations. He notes:

It was a team effort. ...I think that Treasure was very very motivated and wanted to make sure that the results that came out were very good.

This indicates good partnership and an atmosphere of trust permeates from this statements. The good working relations are also picked up by Girlsie who says:

Firstly I noticed how learners have respect for their teachers and fellow learners. Township learners tend to create rows with teachers but here they don't do that. Learners here are respectful.

This good atmosphere is further observed by Girlsie among teachers as well. She notes in her comment:

All teachers are in varying degrees, but they are all accommodating and

approachable. They are patient too.

Girlsie goes on to make observations about the principal's attitude.

I like the fact that she is a teacher and that she teaches well. She also guides us as her learners.

Miss Smate observes that things might have been going well at the school and that a good atmosphere was part of its progress. She recalls:

Oh! When I came to this school I was glad at first and I was looking forward to it. Given the short history of this school, I thought to myself that there was something I felt different that did not match the school I came from, for example. This school was able to obtain good results and so I wanted to be a member of such a prestigious school. I came with the intention of seeing how good things were done here that translated into good results.

While Miss Smate was making a general comment on the results of good working environment, Mr John is specific about what the principal did to enhance good relations. He explains:

The principal as I said, worked closely with two other people. There was also this Carter white man. This man was very friendly to the principal so much so that when we had big occasions here, the principal would go to Mr. Carter for flowers to decorate the venue for the occasions.

A problem of poor communication in farm schools could only be approached by devising a novel way of communicating to ensure that working relations are kept at high levels. So for Rocklands farm school, instead of one Governing committee there were several sub committees in various parts of the of the farming community to facilitate good working relations:

Ye, we would create small committees in these areas to increase interest. We were doing this also for important meetings at the school. These committees would come representing parents, since transport was our major problem.

The fact that the principal takes the lead in her school and that she ensures that others follow, is observed by Miss Inspector as an important contributor towards good working relations. She explains:

In this case she talked to people and the matter and the matter ended with people realizing that Rocklands was a school in need. Then people realized that as a result, they needed to ... they ... needed to ...to ...to contribute towards improvement of school life. So ... so ...they ... these things the principal did ...so ... so she made it look so simple. Her leadership is straightforward. She takes the lead you know. I really appreciate her way of doing things.

Another important point that Miss Inspector makes is that the principal picks good teachers and make use of them for the benefit of the school. She explains:

The principal used anyone who worked well with her, you see. So far in our meetings it was either herself who attended or Miss Jones whom she trusted and sent out to represent her.

Miss Inspector goes on to praise the evident co-operative spirit between the principal and the teachers which has led to good performance by grade twelve learners. She explains:

The group twelve learners the principal had at the time was very co-operative. Teachers who handled grade twelve were also co-operative. They were sacrificing a lot, you see. The principal had also a way of communicating her initiatives. Eh... her ideas were acceptable, you see.

One of the striking observations by the respondents is their perception of the principal's leadership style. They have emphasized her strength, strong will and forcefulness in the execution of her duties. The idea of an autocratic leader has appeared in various forms describing the principal's approach in dealing with various situations

#### **4.2.9 THE PRINCIPAL IS VERY STRONG AND AUTOCRATIC**

Some respondents were explicit about the principal's force and lack of consultation on some issues and others noted the intimidatory nature of the principal, which has rendered many teachers docile and compliant. Miss Smate highlights the principal's rigid approach in her administration. She expresses her general concern:

The most important problem here is that there is a big difficulty

in accepting change especially if people have told themselves that these changes are not going to be accepted in their minds. The other thing is that people get used to their way of doing things and this therefore, inhibits change.

Then she expresses a direct comment on the principal on the matter. She says:

I find the principal very difficult. She is very difficult to work with. She is used to doing her things her own way and has grown to take all things at a personal level.

She sums up the dictatorial attitude of the principal by making this declaration:

She [the principal] does not consult anyone on anything. So it is difficult to work with that kind of person. She is very strong and very capable. ...and I think she has been operating alone for a long time. The other thing is that teachers have been very docile and accepting everything...

Big Boy seems to concur with Miss Smate's perception. He has noted the principal's strong approach in running the school. He notes:

She [the principal] is strong, very strong. We sometimes request to go and practise our play, may be in preparation for sport tournament, and she will straight out refuse. Then we know there is nothing else we can do.

Miss Terry makes the point that teachers do not have decision-making powers at times and this leads to the voice of the principal dominating. She explains:

Firstly, at this school you have to understand that we even have difficulties making decisions or coming up with suggestions. It is always left up to the principal. But I guess that is how things are done here because even if you suggest something and everyone agrees, the next thing you will hear is that the principal has changed the decision at the next meeting.

Miss Terry becomes explicit about the leadership style that denies the majority of teachers the basic democratic practices. She points out:

She is very autocratic ...she is autocratic and she can be good. She is from the old school and traditional...

One cannot fail to see a benevolent despot being described by Miss Terry. This is an important contrast or to put it differently, it is an interesting contradiction that needs more discussion at the second phase of my analysis. The elements of autocracy are described further by Miss Terry and the contradiction also comes out. She says:

...She can be progressive when she is willing. You see, when she is willing anything and everything can start happening but she just had got to be the one who is willing.

Girlsie sums the strength of the principal in this way.

When I came to Rocklands the principal had strict control over all activities and they were strictly observed. That has continued to this day. ...You see, pupils here are governed by strict rules and boundaries they know what is expected of them. ...and they listen. They do what they are told to do...

Earlier on I showed how Miss Inspector saw the principal. She mentioned her lack of fear as one of her (principal) defining characteristics. It may be this element that points to the perception of autocracy. I noted her view:

When she came back as a principal she changed things because I have noticed that she had administrative skills. Firstly she is not intimidated. If she wants to go out to venture into new territory, whether the outcome is going to be good, she says to herself, " I am going to try."

### **4.3. SUMMARY**

The data presented here reflect the ideas, perceptions and experiences of the respondents and the data is based on the interviews held with all of them. The data are presented in a categorized form as they represent the sum total of views expressed on matters relating to the role of the principal in a successful farm school. These actions by the principal help in the creation and development of themes that encapsulate the role of leadership in an educational environment.

The respondents in varying degrees have shown that the principal of Rocklands is strong, capable and willing to work. They have shown that she is assertive and takes initiative

without fear or favour. This is probably part of the reason why the school has been able to go grow and improve at the same time.

The respondents have highlighted the co-operative spirit of the principal and have pointed out how she has gone out of her way to link up with all school community members for the benefit of the school. She has opened good communication lines with the Department of Education, with the Governing body, the farm manager, teachers and learners. The co-operation received from the farm manager is an issue that I will discuss at length at the analysis stage because it adds another important dimension in the farm school education.

Respondents have shown that the principal is active and is a hard worker. She goes the extra mile in her attempt to make her school better. She not only manages the school, she is also a teacher, something that keeps her in touch with the teaching and learning.

The principal has been shown to be orderly and full of care for all, especially the learners. The learners have reciprocated the care they receive from the principal by giving her the respect she deserves. Respondents agree that the principal is orderly and that her school has strong disciplinary code which eventually ensures that order rules.

Charismatic characteristics have been identified by respondents and this can be linked to all the other categories I have mentioned so far. The principal is seen as a person prepared to make personal sacrifices, go the extra mile and willing do go beyond the call of duty “for the sake of these children.” That is what Miss Tops said to show her dedication to the cause of farm school children.

The principal has been seen as transformational in her approach in that she has been looking for changes for the better in her school. Respondents agree that the school is where it is today because of the vision and willingness of the principal to be part of great change. From grade 7 the school moved obstacles until it became one of the few farm schools to have grade twelve.

The principal is seen as a problem-solving agent who helps people overcome difficult problems they face in their daily work at the school. Respondents agree and show by

examples how the principal has overcome various obstacles that stood on the way of progress. Transport, delinquency, poverty and various other crippling problems faced by her school have not been totally eradicated, but the principal “did not fold her arms” but rolled up her sleeves and did something to alleviate the severity of such afflictions.

Respondents have concurred that the principal has created good working relations with all people affected. There is strong relationship between good working relationships and the co-operative spirit that the principal has cultivated. There is a strong belief from respondents that the success of the school depends to a large extent on the good working relations that the principal has cultivated among school community members.

Another important category to emerge from the respondents is the varying degrees of autocratic leadership. While many saw the strength of the principal being a good sign for success others saw this strong leadership as negative and countering the ideals of democracy. I deal at greater length with these aspects when I engage in analysis of the data in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

#### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter an attempt is made to bring the data into sharp focus as issues relating to roles of the principal are highlighted. Theoretical positions about leadership are examined as they relate to the roles of the principal. Each category is checked against the observation findings to see whether there is discernible relationship, link or not. This helps in strengthening the voice of the respondents as they continue to express their ideas and perceptions about the principal's role. This also serves as a triangulation exercise. Yin (1993: 69) regards this stage as important because it helps one to see whether one is able to get the same response from different sources of evidence.

The participant observation I undertook was intended to assist in validating or to prove otherwise the data that emerged from the interviews. Both the data provided by interviews as well as from participant observation are considered because they provide a platform for "thick description" from which categories and themes can finally emerge (van Manen 1988). The evidence of the data I present here should, according to Yin (1991: 71) be presented "in such a way that any reader can observe, question and reinterpret the data if necessary independent of the researcher's narrative position."

In this chapter the categories are subjected to further discussion and analysis and the meanings of the respondents are brought to the surface. These categories are not mutually exclusive. In the development of themes these categories tend to overlap as they appear in more than one theme. The same is true of the data from which categories were created. Same data in some instances appear in more than one category. I shall show how this has happened towards the end of this chapter. Part of the reason is the fact that issues of the principal's role in Rocklands are closely related. The meanings that the respondents attach in the creation of these categories have been retained and distortion has been avoided as far as possible.

The second phase of my analysis and discussion will involve the use of participant observation data to cross-check and validate where possible the interview data. The third phase will be looking at the development of themes, what those themes are and what they say about the role of the principal. The fourth phase of my discussion looks at the impact the role of the principal has had on Rocklands Farm School's pursuit of school effectiveness. The fifth phase looks briefly at gender issues to gauge and evaluate the Rocklands Farm School principal's conduct and character in her leadership role. The last phase looks at the organizational culture of the Rocklands Farm School and how the principal has managed to operate within it.

## **5.1 CATEGORIES**

### **5.1.1 THE PRINCIPAL IS ASSERTIVE, HAS INITIATIVE AND IS NOT INTIMIDATED**

The views expressed by respondents suggest that the principal approaches her task from a position of strength. Her boldness ensures that she is able to tackle all kinds of problems without fear or favour. For a school that has been able to produce good results the stance of the principal is not surprising. Purkey and Smith (1983) make a general comment on this matter by saying that good school management and instructional leadership are among the necessary characteristics for school effectiveness. The implication here is for a strong leader who is capable of taking the initiative and creating an atmosphere that is conducive for a successful teaching and learning environment.

The style of leadership determines to a great extent how the leader influences success in the school over which he/she assumes leadership responsibilities. Conger and Kanungo as cited in Sergiovanni (2000: 7) make the point explicit. They say:

...leaders are more likely to be viewed as persons of character when they advocate a set of purposes and ideas that are sufficiently unique to challenge the *status quo* but still close enough to be accepted by followers.

This statement can be applied to assertive people who have initiative. It also explains transformational leadership that is prepared to take risks as long as followers are ready and willing to buy into new ideas and support the actions of the leader. When Christie (2001: 48) conducted a study of resilient schools she concluded that the major thrust for school success even in extremely difficult environments was “strong manager and leader.” Those who are not afraid to venture into new territory are the ones who are most likely to succeed. Christie continues to explain her findings:

Generally, the principals of schools in the study were strong managers and leaders. Their management styles included some sense of accountability to staff and at least some degree of staff consultation and participation.

The strong qualities of the principal are echoed by Miss Inspector when she says:

Firstly, she (the principal) is not intimidated. If she wants to go out and venture into the new territory ...she... she says to herself “I am going to try.”

When Miss Tops started as a principal at Rocklands the school went up to standard 5 and it was only through her initiative and assertiveness that the Rocklands farm school was eventually able to reach standard 10. Miss Tops was driven by wishes of the community as well as the concern she had when she realized the limited chances the farm school learners had of going further with their education. Her statement serves as a strong motivational force that drives her for the changes she implemented. She points out:

I decided that we needed to make a move towards changing the dull nature of the farm school.

Besides the vision she had the “we” in *we needed to make a move...* suggests the willingness to work with others in the process of changing the farm school’s “dull” situation. Later on Miss Inspector observed that the force and the work of the principal was gathering momentum and that she did not fail to pull others on track with her. Miss Inspector noted this when she said:

You see, at the time the principal was really on the go... she... It was clear that everybody was on board....

With this kind of dedication and the fact that the principal was able to take the people she worked with along with her suggests strong assertive individual who knows where she was heading.

#### **5.1.1.1 MY OBSERVATIONS**

I identified lack of fear in my first few days when I came to the Rocklands farm school. I wrote:

I greeted the principal and we exchanged pleasantries. She informed me of her poor state of health and that she had actually ignored the doctor's orders by attending school on that day.

The idea of ignoring a doctor's orders about one's health for the sake of attending school and the resolve to see to the progress of the school bears testimony to the principal's lack of fear and her determination to show concern for the learners and teachers even to the detriment of her own health. I also noted that there were tests to be written on that day and the principal could not separate herself from these activities. She kept on going out of her office into different classrooms to see that everything was going smoothly for the standard 10 examinations. She also checked and chatted with standard 10 teachers as an on-going routine to establish rapport and ensure that everything was going according to plan.

I believe, from my observation, that the principal has managed to be very effective in this way. I gained the impression that she was watching everything that was going on in her school but was doing this in a discreet way at times. She was also sensing the mood of the school by sharing ideas and views with teachers as an on-going exercise. She was listening to what others were saying and resolving some problems on the spot. I gained the impression that she was meticulously synthesizing information as she progressed from one situation to the next and was therefore using her intuitive senses where necessary to deal with emerging problems. This, to me made her effective in executing her duties (Deal and Paterson 1999: 86).

I believe that it is from these different observation positions I have mentioned that the idea of lack of fear, boldness, assertiveness or ability to take initiative is vividly depicted. The actions of the principal have led in my observation, to her school operating like an oiled machine. I wrote on my third day at that school:

The atmosphere at this school throughout the morning is that of business. Everybody is doing what he/she is supposed to be doing and there is an atmosphere of happy working environment as pupils and teachers go about their chores without noticeable difficulties.

I also observed that in a meeting the principal convened she showed her assertiveness and confidence in the manner she handled the proceedings of the meeting. I observed:

The discussion is cordial. The principal dominates the meeting in different ways. Teachers agree with the principal's ideas and suggestions and sometimes they enthusiastically encourage the principal to do the best she could particularly if the issue has been referred to her for review or decision. Teachers assigned other duties agree to do the work in support of the principal.

The principal took the initiative when the Sports Master failed to achieve the objectives that were set out. I observed that in a special meeting she called she insisted on the precise things the Sports Master ought to have done. Not only that but she also laid out what the Sports Master was now expected to do to rectify the problem. In my observation I wrote:

At about 11h00 the principal talks to the Sports Master and voices her dissatisfaction with the sports arrangements and plans. She asks the Sports Master to meet with the committee to formulate new plans and arrangements because she needed to know progress and that she also wanted to be ready to react to new plans that would be brought up.

This is an illustration of actions by the principal who wants to make sure that all aspects of school activities are brought to her attention; that the principal has an input and gives direction. She does not wait for things to collapse but takes the initiative and proactively remedies potentially damaging actions. One can hear the voice of Miss Inspector when she notes that the principal takes initiative and that she acts as a role model "so that others may follow." This category is corroborated by my observation and thereby strengthens the views expressed by respondents about the principal's assertiveness and lack of fear. That leads me to the second category, *viz*; the principal is co-operative.

## 5.1.2 THE PRINCIPAL IS CO-OPERATIVE

The spirit of co-operation permeates the data as respondents directly and indirectly refer to actions taken by the principal as indicators of co-operation. The principal herself in her attempt to ensure the smooth running of the school narrates the co-operative stances she has undertaken. The co-operative spirit is expressed by actions the principal took earlier on to improve sport in the farm school. She noted:

We started vigorously so much so that in our first year of sporting activities we brought home...eh... we... brought home ...eh... I think it was seven trophies.

The principal asserts that progress in this area could only be made if there was willingness on the part of teachers, parents, Departmental Officials and learners to listen to one another and help one another so that the goals set up can be achieved easily. I have observed that she was prepared to give an ear to the parents because she states:

I listened and noted from the parents what the real problems were and also noted what they wished for. I became aware why the previous learners of this school could not go further with their education.

The principal had to co-operate with the farm manager whom she knew from the time she was an ordinary teacher. She knew him as a man who was keen to assist the school in whatever way possible. She used that opportunity and started to work with the farm manager. The result was the changing of the “dull nature” of farm school into a vibrant modernized school, rated one of the best in the Eastern Cape because of its outstanding performance. The Principal remembers:

I had in mind Mr Charliwood. He was still a farm manager when I became the principal of Rocklands farm school. I knew that he had some exciting ideas about this school.

It is the principal’s astuteness and diligence that have helped the involvement of the farm manager because she knew that if she wanted progress and support she needed to take Mr Charliwood on board particularly as he had “exciting ideas” about the school.

From the previous literature the history of farm managers has not been conducive to good schooling. Christie and Gaganakis as quoted in Hartshorne (1992) reminded us that farm managers were important element of Afrikaner National Coalition which “ensured an extremely cheap and immobile labour force with a feudal set of relations” between workers and farmers. Graaf cited in Hartshorne (1992) adds that farm schools were therefore, an extension of farmers’ control of farm labour. It is interesting to note that in this school the farm manager has done the unexpected and has become part of the school’s transformational process. It is also interesting to note that the farm manager of this school made a declaration that ran contrary to the farm school managers’ trend. Mr Charliwood declared in the interview:

Well you know, eh... eh... if the country is to succeed, we need to start with the children first. There ...eh ...eh was education; apartheid years. Education was not what it should have been ...I realized that if I still stay in this country, and I love this country, I got to put my little bit, try and help.

That is exactly what the farm manager did. He tried to help and the principal was able to pursue her dreams and determination knowing that she had solid support from an unusual sector, the farm school manager. This farm manager cared for the children irrespective of the apartheid system and its oppressive policies.

The data also show the principal co-operating with teachers. When she started to work at Rocklands Mr John recalls that she was assisted by another lady teacher from a deregistered school to run Rocklands farm school. They assisted one another in the early stages of her management and this prepared her for the ultimate thrust into the world of excellence she brought into the school. This is what Mr John had to say:

At the time she (the principal) had assistance from another lady who came from a deregistered farm school called Waverly Hills. This lady helped the new principal cope with the demands of managing a school.

At the early stages of Rocklands farm school development the principal was seeking support and any co-operative assistance she could get from all stakeholders. She succeeded to a great extent in realising the goals she set for herself. She was able to do these things because parents have already consulted with her and informed her of their

wishes and what they were looking forward to in respect of school work. She therefore realized that the route to success would be through co-operative actions.

The principal involved learners as well in her quest for co-operative work. Her aim was to ensure that learners enjoyed schooling and this would in turn motivate them to be committed to their work and their school. The principal explains her approach to co-operating with the learners of her school. She states:

I was pleading with them (learners) and I was preparing many things for them so that they would be mentally prepared for whatever challenges they were likely to face.

The principal sees this co-operation as a motivating factor. She had to work even harder after she was set back by a serious allegation of cheating. This was a very demotivating episode in the principal's career but she decided to press on and close the gap between herself and her learners. She put it this way:

I tried to work hard for the sake of my learners. I decided to motivate them and as a result we did all that was possible as we used to do before the allegation of cheating surfaced.

Miss Terry notices the spirit of co-operation when she looks specifically at the actions of the principal and how these actions are received by teachers. She says:

Oh! She (the principal) is good; good at being influential that's what! She is capable of bringing fresh ideas and we accept them with the intention of implementing them. When we finally do, things change for the better.

There is no denying Miss Terry's statement that the results of co-operating with the principal has led to good progress. This is true when one realizes that the school grew from standard 5 to standard 10 as it is at present. In addition the school has maintained a highly successful pass rate, something which Miss Terry is alluding to. Blase and Blase (1999: 132) describe an instructional leader *inter alia*, as someone who advances the cause of leadership a step further as he continues to build on a repertoire of flexible alternatives. The fact that the principal brings in fresh ideas on which teachers act

corroborates the role of instructional leader and, according to Miss Terry this allows things “to change for the better.”

It is also possible to see a transformational leader at work who according to Burns as cited in Smyth (1984: 41) “has ability to envision new social conditions and communicates this vision to his followers.” Again the co-operative spirit engendered by the principal is confirmed in Drath and Palus cited in Horner (1997: 279) that “people working together in an organization need to develop socially understood interpretations so that they can be effective as a group.” What Miss Terry raised here seems to concur with Drath and Palus’ statement.

#### **5.1.2.1 MY OBSERVATIONS**

I noted in March when I had been at the school a few days that there was general co-operation among all people in the school. I attended a meeting of the staff and I made the following observation:

The discussion is cordial. The principal dominates the proceedings. Teachers agree and enthusiastically encourage the principal to do the best she could possibly do for the benefit of the school. Teachers are prepared to do their part to support the principal.

I noted that teachers were discussing issues as these were introduced. Teachers were ready to co-operate with the principal through consensus or sometimes through constructive criticism or discussions in order to carry out their duties in an atmosphere of trust and goodwill. The ability of the principal to engage everyone and also work with all for the benefit of the school was illustrated when the principal approached me to attend a meeting in which she wanted my opinion and advice. The school was experiencing difficulties with the Municipality on the regulations regarding electricity consumption by the school. I made a note of this and recorded it thus:

The principal called on me at about 10h30 to advise her on the electricity issue for the school. She explained that the school was paying for electricity by buying vouchers from municipal offices at a discount but that there was now a dispute and that the school was now without electricity. I informed her that the Governing Council should be in the forefront to discuss the problem

with the relevant officials as they had the statutory right to do so and that the Department of Education needed to be informed of progress.

The principal had a problem and realized that she could use someone's expertise to help her solve the problem. This is in line with Miss Inspector's view that the principal "uses everyone" with expertise for the benefit of the school. In other words, she requested my co-operation because she knew that success depended on people helping one another in an organization. In this instance the principal made her intentions clear and the purpose explicit.

The principal expects everybody to be fully engaged and as soon as there appears to be problems she tackles these immediately so that bad habits do not find root. She knows that if the situation deteriorates it could spell the end of the co-operative spirit. One day I observed that the principal noticed that some learners moved to bushy areas during breaks. She immediately after break called an assembly and cautioned learners against the dangers lurking in bushy areas. I noted this and wrote:

At about 11h30 after the bell had rung the principal called for a short assembly. She warned and admonished learners who moved into bushy areas during break because she feared for their lives and that crime could be easily committed. She ordered that the younger ones should not wander away from school premises and that they should always be together. The learners showed their appreciation of this advice by verbally agreeing with the principal. I did not see or feel any form of intimidation or threat by the principal.

In another meeting I observed that the spirit of co-operation was permeating throughout the deliberations. The ideas that the principal had were shared among the staff members and got full support. I noted this and wrote:

The principal suggested that on days that do not have morning assemblies teachers should meet for short reflections and quick meetings of about 5 minutes. All teachers saw the wisdom of such meetings and wholeheartedly supported the principal on this good idea because it was going to afford every teacher an opportunity to be heard and help all of them to be kept abreast of all developments. Some agreed that it was the best way to start a new day.

Another important category to emerge from the data is that the principal cares and is orderly. This is closely linked to the co-operative category I have just discussed.

### 5.1.3 THE PRINCIPAL CARES AND IS ORDERLY

The data presented in the previous chapter from which care and orderliness emerge have two important features that describe the principal's role as leader of the school. The first one is that she cares. She has a deep sense of caring and a concern for her learners and teachers. Their interest comes first and she is prepared to protect the learners' interests. Big Boy noted this when he said:

We are being cared for here old man, really being cared for by our teachers and principal. She goes out of her way to make us comfortable.

This statement tends to sum up the attitude of the principal towards learners and this declaration needs to be explained in detail by observing what the respondents had to say. It is important to note at this stage what Bass (1990: 17) says about leaders who have a caring attitude. He points out that leadership is more exacting and requires that the leader faces more obligations than the rest of the members in an organization. In order that leaders can keep organizational nature of their schools fully operational they have to work with people in ensuring that the aims and objectives as set out are pursued. This statement suggests, *inter alia*, that the leader has to cultivate a sense of care for others to facilitate success.

Some of the actions of the principal at Rocklands land themselves in the category of care. Big Boy as a learner leader has this to say:

I know for a fact that she (principal) teaches well. When the year comes to an end the principal would keep matriculants at school after hours teaching them and even allowing those who live far away from school to sleep here at school.

This is a demonstration of a caring principal at work who goes the extra mile in order to achieve her aims. Fiedler as cited in Boys (2002: 22)) describes an important feature in the contingency theory that identifies leaders. He notes that leaders may lean either towards people-orientated approach or task-orientated approach in their style of leadership depending on the situational demands and the leader's attitude. This theory

also gives insight into how leaders act differently in every situation. I realize that at Rocklands it seems that the principal is leaning towards satisfying her followers, in this case the learners. The principal has acted to ensure that learners benefited from her involvement. The kind of care the principal has shown is illustrated by Horner (1997: 271) when she sees the principal as primarily responsible for helping followers develop behaviours that will enable them to reach their goals or desired outcomes. The explanation from Horner is that good results are not likely to be obtained if there is a lack of caring attitude from leaders.

The caring attitude of the principal spills over into her charismatic actions which I shall deal with in detail later in this chapter. This is an example of overlap I have referred to. Mr John also captures the extent of this care. He points out:

There was also a preschool operating here. Even here the principal was taking money from her purse to pay these mothers who were looking after the young ones.

The point of overlap comes in when I consider that the principal is driven by her concern for the poor and the desperate situation in which the farm school people find themselves. At the same time she takes risks and makes personal sacrifices by paying people money, an act the community is supposed to carry out. These overlapping views emerge from the respondents as they begin to look at the principal's actions. Mr Charliwood remembers some of the sacrificial acts of the principal has done. He says:

And there was a donation from one of the big corporations to put up a few classrooms, but ...eh ... that is all that I could think of. Oh! and transport was a big problem, getting children to school and back home. Treasure [Principal] made transport arrangements including her own vehicles so that learners could attend school without fail.

The aim and drive for these actions is well articulated and the involvement of the principal is clearly described by the farm manager. I need to look at the second portion of this category, *viz*; orderliness.

I have indicated already that the principal was orderly. This also emerged from the data which I want to highlight here. Orderliness suggests a management style that seeks to

create planned actions for desired outcomes. It suggests eradication of interference as far as possible in the execution of duties. Order becomes an important element of school effectiveness as it stands in opposition to chaos, lack of vision, lack of cohesion and lack of direction. Existence of order in a school points to good organizational attitude. Deal and Patterson (1999: 3) make the point:

While values, folkways and traditions will take form reflecting the unique character of educational institutions, the human side of good organization may be worth emulating. (My emphasis).

“Good organization” suggests order as well. Bass (1990: 383) stresses the importance of orderly running of institutions because he says that knowing how to get things done, self-confidence and alertness to and insight into situation would act as a driving force to create stability and cohesion in an institution.

The work that the principal does at Rocklands does not elicit discontent and people seem happy to go along with the principal’s plans and actions. Mr John highlights the way the principal handles the funds of the school as an example that leads to stability. He points out:

Because of special circumstances it became clear to the members that there would not be a capable person to handle financial affairs than the principal. Parents were satisfied that the principal would handle the finances without any confusion being allowed to disturb the process. We were proved right because every time she gave financial report there were no queries or misunderstandings. Income and expenditure was clear and this created order among parents.

The effective running of the school in whatever section of activity strongly suggest order and helps in the stabilization of those activities. The fact that the principal was prepared to organize sleeping accommodation for her standard ten learners points to her orderly organizational power because she had to talk to teachers parents and learners for her idea to find root. Mr John, Miss Inspector and the learners, Big Boy and Girlsie as well as the farm manager Mr Charliwood, confirm this.

Big Boy goes further in affirming the principal’s orderly leadership in that he compares the township school from which he comes and Rocklands farm school where he now

enjoys the teaching that is conducted in a good atmosphere because he says that “things are straight and well managed.” Girlsie confirms Big Boy’s version in that she noted when she arrived into the school that “things were strictly observed.”

Girlsie goes a step further about good order when she refers to school discipline that is maintained at the school, she says:

Yes, we like to be disciplined and we want that to be maintained even though sometimes some of us are unable to control themselves.

The reciprocal nature of discipline as suggested here underlies good working conditions because learners have given their full support and are willing to be disciplined if they transgress the rules. Tannebaun and Schmidt see the maintenance of good order as cited in Dunham (1995: 42) as based on three sets of factors which determine the effectiveness of leaders, *viz.* forces in the manager, forces in team members and forces in the situation.

They point out that these forces are embedded in the system of values, confidence in team members, feelings of security, need for independence within the organization and high expectations from the leaders. They see these forces as driving an organization to higher levels of achievement because all these would happen if there is commitment on the part of the leader to ensure orderly processes. For schools to succeed therefore, there must be sets of beliefs that are held high to ensure progress and these beliefs, norms and standards must be shared by all in the organization.

French and Raven as cited in Smyth (1989: 20) seem to concur with this idea of maintenance of good order because to them it stems from “referent power.” This power is based on feelings of identification as one group or as belonging to a particular organization under a power wielder. At Rocklands the principal wields power that is accepted and cherished by all who are affected by it. This power allows the principal to carry out instructions, duties and errands that are seen by followers as beneficial to them. Invariably, under these circumstances maintenance of order is assured.

Some of the actions the principal has pursued point to her intention to maintain order in and around the school.

- She has changed a dismal situation where there were standard 5 “dropouts” into a position where learners become proud owners of standard ten certificates.
- She has involved herself in solving a chaotic transport situation with the view that learners would be assisted to a great extent. She did this despite the cost to herself and the suspicion and envy that surfaced at a later stage
- She has continued to be part of what goes on in the classes and has maintained constant vigilance on teaching and learning processes.
- She has stepped in when a teacher could not cope with the Biology subject with the intention of ensuring that there was no unnecessary break in the teaching process as well as ensuring that the non-availability of a teacher would not degenerate into chaos.

### **5.1.3.1 MY OBSERVATIONS**

In line with the pursuit of orderly leadership I reflected in May on what I saw as an overall manifestation of an orderly school. I wrote:

I found the school so quiet from outside, but I noted that there was buzzing inside the classrooms. I was convinced that work was being done by teachers and learners. The presence of the principal seemed to strengthen the teaching culture at the school. Not a single child could be seen outside the class. Those who came late had to creep into their classrooms and continue from where their classmates were working. I gained the impression that teachers were co-operating well with learners and that they respected their principal and not feared her in a negative sense.

This reflection gives a picture of orderliness at work which has now become the whole school process. It has also helped in consolidating the data referred to in the previous discussion emanating from different respondents. I also made an observation earlier in March which support the principal’s orderly inclinations. I noted:

At about 11h05 a lady comes to see the principal representing Active Youth Activities. She reports that she got messages about the launch of the programme at that school. She stated that she was haphazardly organized. She had come to clarify the situation. The principal took her to Miss Basi who was tasked with running the programme in the absence of the expected guest. The principal told her that the programme was launched with great fanfare but that she would

get details from Miss Basi.

When a sport issue came up I noticed the principal calling a meeting of the affected people because it appeared that there were failures in the organizational stages as well as in the implementation stages. I noted the following:

At about 10h00 the principal held the meeting and voiced her dissatisfaction with the whole organization of the sporting activity. She directed her displeasure at the Sports Master as the head of the section despite the fact that it was two teachers who did not do well what they were asked to do. She immediately instructed the Sports Master to convene a sports meeting and report progress to her before the end of the day.

In what appears to be a problem the principal prevails in that she confronts the difficulties with confidence. She directs people and points out what is wrong and looks for solutions. She does not wait for things to fall apart before she takes action as this is shown by the sport episode. This corroborates the views expressed by respondents that the principal has order and care in the manner she leads the Rocklands farm school.

The next category looks at the principal as a hard worker and a very active person.

#### **5.1.4 THE PRINCIPAL WORKS HARD AND IS VERY ACTIVE**

The data present varying aspects of hard work and this gives credence to her active involvement in the management of the school. Respondents have shown how the principal works and how she has been able to achieve her objectives as a result of working very hard. Miss Inspector and Mr John notice the principal's hard work even to the detriment of her health. When Mr John says "The principal is dedicated in her work" he sums up the underlying drive, *viz*: "dedication." Miss Inspector observes that this dedication may have led to the deterioration of her health. She says:

The principal has been pulling her weight and working till sunset for many days but now I can see that the principal is facing a new problem. This problem might be caused by her too much work. The problem now is her poor health.

Mr John has already noted that the principal is “very active” and that she has good approach which helps her to use people as “resources.” The principal is able to influence those she works with so that they too, become committed to hard work. Giddens as cited in Smyth (1989: 23) suggests that:

Human beings live out their daily lives and socially construct their reality through negotiations, contestations and resistances to rules and resources within which their lives are entwined.

The process as suggested here forces the principal to deal with varying issues and discuss these with the people she works with so that at the end there could be understanding. The sharing of ideas and the willingness of all involved to help one another gets acknowledgement in Giddens’ statement.

Instructional leadership (Blase and Blase 1999: 130) suggests that leaders integrate their actions, collaborate, create peer-coaching activities and ensure that collegial study groups are all pulled together into a holistic force to promote professional dialogue. Miss Inspector has highlighted this in her description of the principal’s actions because she noted that the principal uses teachers as resources. She does not regard people as though they know nothing

Working hard helps in the creation of means for learners to be provided with a good learning environment. Macbeath and Mortimore (2001: 5) elaborate on this view because they go on to say that for success to be possible, an immense exercise in “engineering” on the part of teachers and other agencies is necessary. This is initiated by a leader who knows the territory or who understands what needs to be done.

What is of particular interest here is that this is a farm school that has experienced serious disadvantages in its socio-economic conditions. This school has shown how one creates great influence over followers and then overcome some socio-economic problems by not succumbing to them but by looking at best ways of turning the threats into opportunities. The two authors I have referred to point out further that in a well-led and managed school there would be less variations and greater consistency which eventually lead to “school effect”(Macbeath & Mortimore 2001).

The principal's dedication and her involvement in the teaching practice suggests co-operation with teachers that enhances cohesion and consistency in the work they do. Lloyd as quoted in Crawford, Kydd and Riches (2002: 42) seems to support the idea of hard work from a leader as well as from teachers because, according to him, "extended professional" approach is when collaborative and developmental work are actively encouraged and the school is able to move forward along an agreed route.

Sergiovanni (2001: 131) looks at the principal's active engagement in advancing the cause of education. He points out:

Principals provide the climate and interpersonal support that enhances teachers' opportunities for fulfillment of individual needs for achievement, responsibility, competence and esteem.

I found this position corroborated by Miss Inspector when she said:

If you find her at school she is always in classes because she wants to see ... that... eh... that... what is happening. She also wants to make sure that there is progress.

Big Boy as a learner pinpoints the hard working principal by citing her direct classroom involvement. He explains:

Firstly, my principal teaches standard 10. I have seen her teaching. I know for a fact that she teaches well. (My emphasis).

This acknowledgement comes from a learner as an endorsement of the principal's dedication to work. She is looking for good results and is prepared to go all the way to ensure that that happens.

#### 5.1.4.1 MY OBSERVATIONS

I noted on my first day that the school motto may have a certain amount of force in ensuring that the school had a particular vision which the school motto enshrines. The school motto reads:

##### **Sophumelela Ngomzamo**

The literal explanation is: **We shall succeed through hard work.**

On my second day at the school I reflected on what I had already observed. My arrival was regarded with suspicion. They could not understand what exactly I intended doing in their school. They were wondering why their school was chosen and not other schools. I made the following comment when I met the principal in her office:

The principal is at pains to help and goes all out to try and make me feel comfortable. She is also trying to make every teacher understand my presence at this school by talking to those who seem to have difficulties in understanding my presence.

I have noted that the principal is confronting problems head-on and is prepared to make room for those who do not understand so that they too, could fall in line. This is an example of a hard worker who is actively engaged with everybody in her school to achieve success through hard work, as the school motto suggests.

I also made an observation on how the principal deals with day to day issues in her school. Early in March I recorded the following:

The principal takes rounds and visits classrooms. She talks to pupils already at school to arrange furniture in certain ways in different classes. There is a general controlled movement of pupils as the principal keeps on moving from one class to the next.

In the administration area I noted that the principal was determined to see that work was done properly. She also stood ready to assist or advise where necessary. I recorded from my observation the following:

The principal called a team that was tasked yesterday to look after the food scheme programme to report progress. A short report was given and the principal expressed her frustration with the report. She reminded people to meet deadline and to be proactive and not allow “problems to arrive.” She told the team to go back and work out a better programme and report to her without her calling for them to do so. Immediately after this she called the clerk so that they could sort out work that needed finishing as well as submissions that should be sent to the District Office.

The principal appeared to be insisting on good governance because she kept linking with every teacher and learner in ensuring that they were all discharging their duties on time and doing so as a team. This created the kind of bonding that Sergiovanni (2001: 131) sees as necessary for the development of shared values and maintenance of good relations within the institution. If this situation occurs Sergiovanni regards it as critical for the creation of a community of learners and teachers. Sergiovanni states further that “purposing” establishes the importance of shared goals and expectations as well as approves modes of behaviour to create a strong school culture. The fact that the principal of Rocklands Farm School talks to everybody in her school, expressing her dislikes and pleasure in the way they conduct themselves, is an example of a leader who wants to foster cohesion and help establish common values. This can only be gained through hard work.

Despite the appearance of order and good governance postmodern belief is that there are always tensions, paradoxes and contradictions within an organization which are dictated by power relations (Gunter 2001: 12). The attempts by the principal to create cohesion are at times frustrated by misunderstandings, failures by some to do what they have been required to do. This creates these tensions and may scupper good intentions and result in a number of discords. I have already referred to the problem brought about by the Deputy Principal and the Sports Master who did not do the work specified as required. This allowed the principal the opportunity to confront the failures and actively assist them to correct their mistakes.

It is clear that the principal’s actions are geared towards school improvement and there is willingness to transform the minds of learners and teachers so that they all can articulate what the school motto says.

### **5.1.5 THE PRINCIPAL IS CHARISMATIC**

I have decided to highlight this particular trait because of what the respondents have explained as well as what I have observed during my stay at the school. The respondents explained the charismatic tendencies of the principal which have led, I believe, to the dramatic improvement of the farm school. I do not believe that the changing of the farm school situation would have been possible if the leader did not have transformational outlook and charisma. It is these particular characteristics which show that the leader is endowed with special gifts and tenacity. The leader is able to change a poor or dismal situation for the better. In other words this would be a transformational leader who wants to influence followers so that they may emulate the leader's style for the benefit of schooling. This is done selflessly and without any intention to gain anything for herself. In addition, charisma suggests a leader with extraordinary powers capable of bringing about change at great risk and great cost to herself. There is belief that such a leader does all these things because of the caring drive that pushes the leader on despite the difficulties.

I have been exposed to this kind of a leader at this farm school who seemed committed to improving the plight of farming community through her sincere engagement with everyone affected. I want to highlight some of the charismatic tendencies identified by the respondents as they watched principal's actions throughout the school process. Mr John noted identified foresight and ability of the principal to "rescue a desperate situation."

I think that what Mr John says here serves as a general statement from which other respondents build the leader's charismatic characteristics as she "rescues desperate situations." Mr John cites some examples of selflessness on the part of the principal. He says:

And then Miss Veli had to fill in the vacancy created as a result of the Principal's intervention. And then she came in as a substitute. The principal was paying the other teacher from her own pocket. The principal did that.

There was also a preschool operating here. Even at that level the principal was taking money from her purse to pay for the services of preschool teachers.

This is sacrificial work which shows the extent to which the principal is prepared to go to make the school motto a reality. There was also a vexing problem of transport in this farm school. Mr John agrees that the principal went beyond the call of duty because she “offered her transport” to help the majority of parents who did not have money to pay for their children’s transport.

Miss Inspector concurs with the view of sacrifice expressed by Mr John. She makes the point:

She [the principal] did not attach too much importance to herself as a principal. She goes down to the lower levels. So what happened was that the principal, due to the failure by parents, was prepared to offer transport for these poor children.

Miss Smate also made an observation that hard working and keenness for good performance by the principal was rubbing off on to teachers and learners because she noted:

They [learners] were keen and were willing to take orders from the teachers and the principal. They were good at what they were doing and in turn they made teachers’ work much easier. They were dedicated to work as a result of the effort made by the principal.

The admission made by Miss Smate about the principal’s good work which has ultimately made the learners to emulate her style as a tonic for success has shown that learners’ interest in their own education has increased. This situation finds support in Sergiovanni (2001: 137) who points out that charismatic leaders have the ability to touch people in meaningful ways. As a consequence of that people “respond to their leaders and to their ideas and values they stand for with unusual commitment and effort.” (My emphasis).

Conger and Kanungo as cited in Sergiovanni (2001: 141) contend that charismatic leadership behaviours result in extraordinary levels of commitment and performance. Sergiovanni explains the commitment more fully. He says that charismatic leaders are

able to help others reach higher levels of need fulfillment. They point out that charismatic leaders are able:

...to extract more meaning from their lives, and to see that what they are doing is something special and significant. When these needs are addressed, followers invariably respond with higher levels of commitment, effort and performance.

The vision of the leader is seen by the farm manager, Mr Charliwood, as the driving force for the principal not only to do wonders but also to influence learners so that they can engage in magnificent work. He explains:

Treasure [the Principal] was very sure that the results that were to come out would be very good. The discipline was something unbelievable. Those kids were keen, they would come in during holidays. All teachers... they... they came in... they pushed on.

From what Mr Charliwood says it becomes clear that there is an effort to make sure that schooling enterprise is a success and that the effort of the principal is filtering through to teachers and the learners.

The farm school setting calls for an extraordinary person to perform over and above the normally expected way to ensure that a valuable change for the better is secured. The Rocklands farm school principal has done this and has realised best results for four years without fail. Actions by the principal in this regard point to an attempt at creating conditions for school effectiveness.

#### **5.1.5.1 MY OBSERVATIONS**

I have looked at various actions by the principal; what she had done to be judged as a charismatic leader and I have discovered that indeed there are pointers to her charismatic inclinations. I reflected on some of the things she had done in May and I commented as follows:

I have noticed the way the school continues to run smoothly despite

the absence of the principal and some members of the staff. Their absence is not obvious and is not felt at all. Teachers attending school seem to be covering for those who are absent in that no visible evidence suggests that there are teachers absent. Teachers seem to be handling the school activities adequately well. I got the sense that Friday might be treated differently but it looked like any other day with no early breaks or lethargic mood from teachers and learners and I was impressed by this. The voluntary clerk whom the principal recruited and trained was at work updating the registers making various calculations and updating records appropriately class by class. I found this clerk diligent and meticulous for a person who was basically working for no pay. I have not seen such dedication even among the salaried clerks of other schools I have had contact with.

I believe that in my reflections I have pointed to conditions within which charismatic leadership thrives and survives. This points to the groundwork that has been laid out for the charismatic leader to exercise the leadership prowess for the benefit of the school. In this instance more and more people within the educational arena are involved. The absence of the principal from the school does not mean that the school descends to anarchy and chaotic situation. Sergiovanni (2001: 141) sees something special and significant done by followers because they believe and share the values the principal stands for. I noted some actions the principal undertook and I recorded the following:

I had a discussion with the principal on security of the school and she informed me that the school was isolated in the bushy area and was not a safe place to keep school valuables. Such items as typewriters, computers, printers, photocopiers etc. could not be left at school. School work had to be taken home to principal's house where all these expensive items were kept. Work had to be done after hours sometimes with the help of the voluntary clerk.

I made a note that the principal came to the school despite the fact that the doctor had the previous day ordered her to stay at home in bed. Her absence from school was linked to her poor health. Her situation was compounded by her husband's deteriorating poor health as well. She had to choose between looking after herself and her husband on one hand and attending to school demands on the other. The urge to be at school superseded the doctor's orders. I found this kind of sacrifice very rare indeed.

I observed on the occasion of bereavement of one teacher who had lost her mother that the principal urged teachers to go to the bereaved family to offer condolences and pray

with the family. She organized her driver and her vehicle free of charge so that it could be used for transporting teachers to the bereaved teacher's home. The principal could not attend because of poor health. This told me more about the act of sacrifice the principal pursued for the good of the school. I also noted that this act must have been driven by sympathy and desire to show that she cared.

Conger as cited in Sergiovanni (2001: 137) says "...the leader must build exceptional trust among subordinates."

It is the process of building the trust "among subordinates" that the principal of Rocklands Farm School has found it appropriate to show sympathy when time calls for it and act in a manner that strengthens human relation.

This leads me to the next category that looks at the principal as motivator and a transformational leader. There is a strong linkage between the charismatic leader I have just discussed and the transformational leader.

### **5.1.6 THE PRINCIPAL IS A MOTIVATOR AND IS TRANSFORMATIONAL**

Respondents in my interviews have explicitly described the motivational actions undertaken by the principal which have given the school a unique character not common among farm schools. The transformational qualities are inferred from the descriptions given by the respondents. The Rocklands principal works for change and she does this by making sure that everyone is involved and becomes part of the overall school performance. The change expressed here is intended to bring about improvements in teaching generally and also to improve particularly the performance of learners.

An example of motivational actions by the principal is highlighted by Mr John when he says:

Then she would make groups each with leaders who assisted the principal in managing the teaching process and other extra-curricular activities.

She would then take them for an excursion. This would make learners interested in their work and this would drive them to work harder to obtain better results at the end of the year.

The principal's motivational spirit is also noted by Mr John when he looks at the story of the school's transport. He states:

The other motivating thing about the principal which caused us to cling to her transport was the safety record of her driver, Mr Nyawuza. As parents we were always relaxed when our children were transported by him because we knew that they were in safe hands.

Miss Smate seems to concur with Mr John in as far as principal's relation with learners is concerned. She notices that the rapport between the principal and learners was outstanding. She says:

They were good at what they did, which in turn made the teachers' work a lot easier. They were so dedicated, you know! I came in August of that year and found that there was a plan already made for September holiday classes. These learners were motivated by the principal and were keen to do their best.

Motivation is intended to improve schooling and is an act the principal devotes much of her time to, to see better school and better results. The principal talks to and acts with her followers to achieve her objectives. Van Maanen as cited in Sergiovanni (2000: 36) believes that motivational actions are driven by what he terms three life-world conditions of pedagogy:

- Loving care for the child
- Hope for the child's future and
- Responsibility for the child

All these life-world conditions seem to provide a moral base for the good practice of teaching. Maslow and Herzberg cited in Sergiovanni (2001: 289) point out that motivation addresses two important needs that people in a school environment have, viz:

- Avoidance of pain, hardship or difficulty and
- Desire for growth, development to realize one's potential.

The principal of Rocklands has acquired the three life-world of pedagogy suggested by Manen and the basic environmental needs suggested by Maslow and Herzberg as cited in Sergiovanni (2001). She wanted to get out of the dreary farm school situation and created a new world for the learners. As a result she has been able to take the school to higher levels of delivery and has made her farm schools one of the best performing schools in the Eastern Cape. One also does not fail to see the transformational content in the actions of the principal as she struggled through difficulties to have an active and progressive school. The changes people have embraced are for the benefit of the whole farming community.

The actions of the principal also indicate an important transactional characteristic embedded in what she has been doing in her school. According to Maslow a leader needs to get work done in a certain way and those who are being led must have their needs met in the process. For the principal to be able to inspire people to do what needs to be done with keenness, zeal and determination there must also be preparedness on the part of followers to carry out those duties and satisfy their interests. Burns as cited in Smyth (1984: 41) highlights visionary leadership as fundamental to the exchange processes hinted by Maslow for the school to succeed. Burns points out:

...the ability of an individual to envision a social condition and communicate this vision to his followers... (*Ibid.*)

is the basis for successful outcomes. What Burns suggests is illustrated in Miss Inspector's views. She identifies some important actions by the principal intended for best outcomes. She notes:

What she used to do was... was... eh... She never told teachers what to do or how things are done. She initiated things so that others may follow you see! People and teachers had to look up to her as a role model.

The vision she crafted has been a driving force which enabled her to handle the school in a certain way. In the process she was able to institute many changes that led to school improvement. Her bold declaration shows this. She told her story which set the stage for the development of her school. She said:

I decided that we needed to make a move towards changing the dull nature of the school. At that time there were four of us plus the retiring principal.

It was the intention of the principal to change the “dull” nature of the school and that points to a vision that I have referred to. It has guided her and led the school to a successful road. Anyone who is engaged in effecting big changes needs, according to Horner (1997: 278) to be a real transformational leader so that he/she can handle changes and challenges taking place within the school environment as well as from outside to ensure that those changes are well managed.

The principal of Rocklands not only had to deal with the Departmental Officials who made her efforts at times very difficult to realize, she also had to motivate learners to change their self concept in a farming environment. She had to win the trust and goodwill of the teachers so that they could fully support her efforts and do away with the “dull” nature of the past in the farm school environment. Miss Tops gives a hint of how she went about changing the school for the better:

I decided that we were going to try and do something with the few teachers I had at my disposal. I went on with these teachers and the majority of Standard 8 learners. Then I had to apply for standard nine classes. I also experienced same problems. The Department did not reply.

This illustrates the willingness of the principal to change the school situation. The teachers were already supporting her efforts but despite this, difficulties like lack of response from Departmental Officials meant that the route to success would not be easy. The efforts by the principal of Rocklands to change the farm school finds support from Burns as cited in Bass (1990: 23). Burns sees certain actions by leaders as transformational and he points out:

... a transformational leader also recognizes the need for a potential follower but he/she goes further, seeking to satisfy higher needs,  
...transforming leadership results in mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.

I have been able to observe actions within the school that helped to identify the leader as a motivator and transformational leader.

#### **5.1.6.1 MY OBSERVATIONS**

An overall impression of the school is summarized to show the effect or results of motivational work and transformational actions the principal has undertaken. I noted:

The school is running smoothly though the principal is absent. The principal has been absent from school for a week because of ill health yet there are no indications that, as far as school work is concerned, she is not at school. It is also interesting to see the chairperson of the Governing Council mingling with staff members casually on a Monday morning. ...The school is quiet and there is an air of busy business. It appears that everybody is putting his shoulder to the wheel. I also saw that the voluntary clerk was doing a marvelous job. I had not seen full-time clerks dedicating themselves the way this lady was doing.

These reflections show how followers have, according to Burns as cited in Bass (1990: 23) “become leaders” and that higher levels of activities are being achieved. Order in this school is maintained and it is not dependent on principal’s presence. Teachers and learners have accepted the school practices and have internalized the norms and values the principal tried to instill through her visionary leadership styles.

I have noted that Drath and Palus as cited in Horner (1997: 279) emphasize the importance of unity of purpose and action as well as sharing of common values. They say:

...people working together in an organization need to develop socially understood interpretations, so they can be effective as a group.

One feels that the Rocklands Farm School has a well-maintained cohesion that helps the school to run smoothly. Well maintained discipline shows that the group of teachers and learners have become “effective as a group” because they have the same views on how things should be done at Rocklands farm school. They have decided to own the process

hence the school is able to function and does not depend on the principal alone nor does it depend on her presence.

Blake and Mouton as cited in Sergiovanni (2001) devised a managerial grid model that assists in explaining progression towards school effectiveness. The grid takes into account concern to achieve good results as well as concern for people within the teaching organization. The closer these two concerns are in the grid model the stronger the case is for school effectiveness. In my observation I have noted that these concerns have been catered for at Rocklands Farm School. All people involved are doing their bit in a reciprocal fashion and as a result can carry out their duties with very little supervision. The air of satisfaction and contentment with the way things run at Rocklands point to and is reflected by orderliness and businesslike engagement by teachers and learners. I have not lost sight of the parental involvement that acts as a boost to the high achieving school. The presence of the Governing Council leader and the ease with which he moves within the school suggests openness and good working relations that impact positively on the school process.

The Blake and Mouton model suggests that when school teachers and their leader are co-operating very well the grid model may be close to perfection. From their discussions the following emerges from the grid model is suggested:

- There is consensus on goals to be achieved
- There is great involvement of staff in the decisions that affect them and the school.
- Delegation is made explicitly clear
- The leader and the followers take decisions when and as needed.

I observed that morning assemblies served as reinforcement platforms and also helped in the introduction of changes. These prepared the people for the psychological readiness to venture into new territories. These change announcements prepared people for their change in behaviour so that school could improve. I wrote in May:

An HOD from the secondary section took over the assembly proceedings as both the principal and the deputy principal were absent from school. She used the opportunity to convey the importance of having positive attitude. She dismissed poor attendance as bad practice and encouraged those present to work even harder to improve results for the year. She emphasized that those who were absent were missing out a lot. She also touched on Grahamstown trip but said the details would be given by the choir master. She stressed the importance of winning as this would boost the image of the school.

These announcements by the teacher fall in line with the transformational nature of the school while motivation is used extensively to encourage change in learner behaviours so that good results may be achieved. The actions by the teacher strengthen the strong resolve of the school to be in line with its motto: through hard work we shall succeed.

I made an observation on how the clerk's involvement in school's administration continued to assist in improving the position of the school. The clerk seems to know the rules of the school and what the school is aiming for. The appearance of difficulties in the course of events forces her and the principal to confront and address these difficulties as they emerge. I made the following observation:

The clerk explained that the school phone was not there to make sporting arrangements for teachers. Teachers were expected to make their own arrangements at their own time and expense. The clerk was also furious that the time register book was not available as it was circulating. She hated the idea because some teachers do not exercise care when writing in the book and it always comes back in a terrible state, more so now that it was raining. She said that the principal would be upset if she found that the book has left the office in the first place. She then went out to search for it. She came back with it and some of her fears about the book were confirmed.

This statements identifies problems that continue to test the stability and good routine the principal and teachers have established. The anger of the clerk at the flouting of good practice and the anticipated displeasure of the principal indicate a strong resolve to maintain a good school. That is why motivational talks become necessary to ensure that chaos and disorder are not allowed to find root.

Another important category is the one that attests to the principal's ability to solve problems. Respondents have shown that the principal works hard to ensure a good school environment by tackling all problems with determination.

### **5.1.7 THE PRINCIPAL ENGAGES IN PROBLEM-SOLVING ACTIVITIES**

Crawford *et al.* (2002: 111) note that interpersonal differences, competition, rivalry, mistrust and misunderstandings may lead to problems within the organization between leaders and followers or among followers. These problems and conflicts, argue Crawford *et al.*, can have value at times because they may encourage dialogue and other mechanisms of problem-solving or conflict resolution actions. Dunham (1995: 117) points out that the emergence of problems within an organization may be caused by a variety of reasons the sources of which may reside within resistance to change. The resistance could embody the following:

- Fear of the unknown
- Lack of information
- Misinformation
- Threat to old held views
- Low or poor trust among members of the organization
- Fear of failure
- Strong peer group norms

Whatever the reasons may be for the emergence of problems the leader's preparedness to go out and work for solutions is the first attempt at creating an atmosphere that would be conducive to good learning and successful performance. Problems at Rocklands are typical of farm schools. Some of these problems have been highlighted by authors as:

- Poor transport to and from farm schools
- Small multi-grade classes
- Few teachers with low qualifications
- Poverty

- Lack of amenities and
- Poor parental attendance of meetings.

Miss Inspector and Mr John had already pointed out how transport confronted the school as a big problem and how the principal tried to tackle it. Mr John noted:

She (the principal) used her own transport, her own vehicles to transport these children.

This does not suggest that through this act the transport issue was completely overcome, it just shows how the leader was prepared to solve the problem and even go beyond the call of duty by offering her own transport. The direct involvement of the principal suggests insight into the purpose of education, sympathy for the learners and empathy for her teachers who need learners, parents who are struggling financially and learners who had to travel to the school from far away places every school day. This kind of action is seen by Bass (1990: 346) as showing transactional and transformational leadership inclinations. He argues:

The leader needs to learn what the followers want so he/she can make the right offers to them for their compliance. ...leaders must also build from stronger base if she/he understands the current interactions of prospective followers. ... (he/she) must have a sense of his/her followers' current wishes and developmental needs. ...the leader should be insightful about his/her followers' interests.

The principal's actions are explained and the combination of leadership traits show how the leader acts the way he/she does in an organization. In the case of Rocklands, for example, I noted that there were few classes when the current principal started leading the school. She was determined to change the situation and wanted the school to grow. But she faced huge problems of poor amenities. Learners who had managed to pass standard 5 had nowhere to go to improve their lot. Miss Tops noted this:

They only pass standard 5 in Rocklands. The other thing is that some learners end up ...eh... end up dropping out of school.

Miss Tops goes on to paint a poor picture of the school at the time; particularly that it negatively affected the learners. She said:

When I left for my studies they (learners) were loitering the dirty streets of Rocklands and some girls had fallen pregnant.

The principal's intention becomes clear that she wants to change the farm school's dreary outlook and invigorate it to new heights of attainment. I have cited the socio-economic challenges that face a farm school generally but despite these the principal's drive was to deal with "dropout" problem in the most efficient way by applying for the upgrading of the school to enable farm school learners to access education just like others in the urban environment. She did this to change the picture of hopelessness she referred to earlier. In other words, the threats to proper schooling for farm school children has been turned around into opportunities of excellence (Dunham 1995: 122)

From the cultural perspective one would regard the principal as a good agent for change in her school. She has been able to identify positive elements that are supportive of good schooling. She continued to build on these positive elements, such as the willingness of parents to work with school people, the readiness of learners to accept school authority and learn earnestly, the positive attitude of teachers towards their school and their leader and the support the office of the Education Department was prepared to give to create a very strong and formidable school (Deal and Paterson 1999: 115).

I want to illustrate the problem as the principal identified it and the decision she made to solve it. Firstly she identified it:

Sir, when I arrived as a principal I found ...I ... I found a very poor school. I think that the enrollment was around 90+ learners...

Then she came up with plans to resolving some of these problems

Yes, the school went up to standard 5 but in the same year I applied to the Department to start a secondary phase. ...Parents learnt that I was a new principal and there was a flood at the gate of new learners. ...and I think we reached 200+ of enrollment in that year.

It is clear that without the principal's initiative, resolve and determination to change the farm school's poor situation Rocklands would not have changed at all. It could have remained a primary school just like all other farm schools which have not changed their status up to now. It appears also that the principal has the ability to motivate for additional posts in her school, something that has been difficult to obtain elsewhere. One also notes that the support she got from the farm manager, another rare occurrence in the farming communities, may have assisted her to achieve great success.

Another attempt I need to highlight was the action of the principal to address poor parental attendance of meetings. The method of creating area meetings with the principal plus the core members of the Council effectively eliminated two problems at the same time, *viz*; transport problems and poor attendance. Miss Terry, Miss Smate and Mr John acknowledge the principal's plan and its good intentions. They also noted that this action was also intended to address poverty by ensuring that the parents were saved money from attending meetings at school. Mr John explains the plan:

We even decided to break up parents for meeting purposes. Those parents for example, who stayed in Uitenhage would be visited by a small committee together with the principal...

The attempts by the principal to solve problems in her school have also been observed by me in my daily encounters with the actions of the school.

#### **5.1.7.1 MY OBSERVATIONS**

I noted that the principal's aim was to improve her school on a daily basis and as a result was prepared to take all problems that acted as threats and changed them to opportunities. In most cases she did not wait for problems to emerge but was very proactive and was thinking ahead. I made the following observations:

The principal reported that some teachers involved in sport wait until the last moment to do what is required of them or to report progress. She reported that to avoid this she was calling every member of staff to address this problem because it had the potential to negatively affect other codes

of sport and the general teaching. When the meeting was called it lasted for exactly one teaching period because she kept on looking at her watch during the duration of the meeting. Issues were discussed and teachers agreed with the issues she raised. The meeting closed with promises that diligence would be the order of the day and that difficulties arising would be tackled as they appear rather than being allowed to fester like a sore and thereby affect the general running of the school.

This was an example of the problem-solving activity at work. I noticed the quick action of the principal to circumvent any chance of bad influence finding roots and bedeviling good working relations. When it comes to actual teaching Girlsie and Big Boy regard their principal as one of the best teachers of the school. She is not intimidated by any big tasks before her. She takes the initiative to solve problems. For example Big Boy claimed that when a teacher could not cope with Biology lessons the principal took it upon herself to teach the affected class.

The sacrificial act by the principal is embedded in this action and her empathy could be understood as one of the driving forces for her decision to take the class. It is perhaps one of the reasons that Miss Inspector had this to say:

If you find her in her school, she is always in classes. She wants to see ...to see eh... she wants to see that eh... what is happening or that there is progress.

Fullan (2000: 8) describes a position in which the principal strives for stability in a school by always being on the lookout for potential difficulties and also making sure that these are tackled immediately and disposed of efficiently. Fullan realizes that interaction between the leader and the environment within which the leader operates is an on-going exercise. He argues that each situation brings its unique outcomes. The ability of the Rocklands principal to deal with difficult situations and make a success of these encounters suggests that she has contingency qualities and is able to apply her mind to emerging problems so that they can be sorted out quickly for the benefit of the whole school.

This leads us to the next category which looks at the principal's ability at creating good working relations.

### **5.1.8 THE PRINCIPAL CREATES GOOD WORKING RELATIONS**

The data pointed to the variety of actions by the principal to facilitate communication, maintaining good attitudes among school community, giving ear to all complaints and suggestions and convincing others about the value of following certain procedures. These actions promote good working relations. Some practices and rituals are necessary for the maintenance of good relations because they encourage unity and cohesion. Deal and Paterson (1999: 31) see these rituals as a means of combining the concrete with the inconcrete. Norms and values that find expression in the morning assemblies for example, serve as a means for conveying and practicing these in a meaningful way.

Hayden and Thompson (2000: 3) believe that maintenance of good working relations lend themselves to school effectiveness that fosters good expectations, positive reinforcement and the maintenance of cohesive atmosphere between the school and homes of learners.

Respondents have noted how the principal goes out of her way to ensure that there are smooth working relations. She promotes this because she knows the benefits of good relations are good examination results and general school improvement. One of the key elements for good working relations is identified by Girlsie when she notes:

Firstly I noticed how learners have respect for their teachers and their fellow learners. ...learners here are respectful and they respect their principal.

Another important element that secures good working relations is identified by Girlsie again when she looks at the attitude of teachers towards learners. She explains:

All teachers are in varying degrees. They differ in the way they deal with learners. But they are all accommodating just like the principal and they are all approachable. They are patient too.

The issues raised by Girlsie here about teachers' attitudes towards the learners seem to be laying a solid foundation for good working relations. It is remarkable that these observations are made by the learner.

The farm manager shows how the principal's confidence in dealing with vexing problems of upgrading her school ensured that she eventually succeeded in getting her way. She had standard 8 learners and wanted to proceed to the next standard despite the disappointing response of the Department. Mr Charliwood gave unequivocal support when he said: "Forget it! Keep going. I will support you."

According to Burns as cited in Smyth (1990) the transformational theory suggests that the leader motivates his/her followers to act without self interest but to do so for the general good of the organization. The farm manager understands the actions of the principal to be aimed at the general good of the school, hence he is prepared to give unqualified support. This is possible because the farm manager trusts the principal and believes in the way she handles school affairs. The principal has shown through her previous engagements that she is capable of achieving her goals. She has shown also that she is capable of working diligently and honestly. The farm manager shares with the principal some of the values that bring about good management.

The sharing of ideas and unity as explained here are also stressed by Dinkmeyer as cited in Udjombala (2001). He maintains that the success of an organization depends or should depend on shared views and shared power rather than power over others. The Rocklands principal cultivates good relations and ensures that sharing is the dominant feature of managing and leading in an organization. Mr John narrated how the principal keeps good relations with a Mr Carter and how this had turned out to be advantageous for the school. He explained:

This man (Mr Carter) was very friendly to the principal because the principal went to him and opened up. This friendship was so much that when the school had big functions the principal would go to Mr Carter for flowers to decorate the venue. Mr Carter was able to assist in many other areas that he had expertise on.

While the principal was able to maintain good working relations it was not easy for her at times. This point is brought home by Smircich and Morgan as quoted in Smyth (1989) when they say:

Leadership implies the presence of considerable tensions and contradictions which when resolved, lead to the continual transformation of the relationships.

The ability of the principal to resolve problems highlighted in the previous category has enabled her to strengthen unity and to drive for the achievement of higher ideals. Smircich and Morgan as cited in Smyth (1989:28) confirm this position because they say:

...the resolution of these organizational tensions and contradictions may give rise to a new unity.

Fiedler and Chemers as cited in Dunham (1995: 42) stress the importance of three situational factors which managers need to be sensitive to so that they can adopt a more effective leadership style. They state that these factors are:

- A group atmosphere that involves trust, respect and loyalty to each other goes a long way to smooth the way for good relations.
- The degree of flexibility involved in the performance of tasks assures one of good relations and
- The recognition of the inherent power the leader has could help in ensuring maintenance of good relations.

The principal may generate trust and loyalty by “talking to the people” as Miss Inspector points out:

She [the principal] talked to people and the matter ended with people realising that Rocklands was a school in need. ...then people realized that and, as a result they needed to... to... eh... to contribute towards the improvement of the school life.

To this Sergiovanni (2001: 80) adds his voice and says:

...quality relationship is an important ingredient in the make up of a good school.

He further states that good relations and maintenance thereof serves as a critical leverage point for school improvement. It appears that leaders initiate good relations in their schools. Success of the schooling enterprise depends to a large extent on the quality of relations the leader promotes and maintains.

#### **5.1.8.1 MY OBSERVATIONS**

My impression of a good school that maintains good working relations was captured in my reflections. I made the following observation:

I have noticed the way the school continues to run smoothly despite the absence of the principal and some few members of the staff. Their absence could not be detected from the way the school was running.

The fact that the school was able to continue without any noticeable problems suggests the maintenance of good relations between teachers and learners as well as among the teachers themselves especially if this happens in the absence of the leader. I expected a different way of behaving among learners and among teachers but this could not be detected.

I observed also that when the principal was present at school she was always on the move, checking and monitoring progress. She was keen to see what was going on and was able to talk to every teacher in the process of checking to find out if there were problems, new insights or some ideas on issues affecting them and the school. The principal was always ready to applaud and recognize success. This created an atmosphere of positive reinforcement. In return teachers gave their best because the actions of the principal have promoted self-motivating conditions and that the principal has instilled self-confidence among staff members. I noticed that in one day the principal was at school the following took place in a space of one hour:

- The voluntary clerk chased the sports committee to submit a report to the principal as she was likely to demand it before the end of the day.

- She called me into a meeting in which she informed me of her doctor's order to stay at home and the deteriorating health condition of her husband.
- She called the clerk and informed her to collect all class registers as she wanted to check class attendances.
- She welcomed the Chairperson of the Governing Council and went on to discuss the planned meeting with parents and the need for the Council to approve intended expenditure for consumables.

These actions point to a quest for smooth operations. She has been involved with different people in her school in a matter of one hour and has been able to discharge her duties efficiently by ensuring that her finger was always on the pulse of her school. The principal carries out these duties despite the fact that she is in poor health and that her husband needs constant vigilance. I have noted that this level of efficient handling of school affairs tends to create conditions for good working relations. I noticed this good atmosphere when the principal called me one day. I recorded the following:

The principal came back and informed me that the clerk was sick and that she needed some help in her office. She told me that her volunteer clerk was among the most efficient clerks she had seen to run her administration but that she taught her all the basics and then supported her. In return, her efficiency had helped teachers to concentrate on their teaching activities without worrying about administrative work. As a result everybody is gainfully engaged because everyone in his place is doing his/her best.

Good work by the clerk has had a positive effect on the whole school showing that efficient involvement in school work creates a reciprocal atmosphere that allows others to do their best as well. I also noted in my reflection a high level of co-operation. I wrote:

I gained the impression that teachers were co-operating well with their learners and that learners and teachers respected their principal and did not fear her.

My observations have corroborated the interview data, which showed that the principal worked hard to create good working relations for the improvement of schooling in Rocklands.

Finally I look at the principal as strong and autocratic leader whom the respondents were able to describe from different viewpoints. My observations have also helped in the understanding of these varying opinions.

### **5.1.9 THE PRINCIPAL IS VERY STRONG AND AUTOCRATIC**

The interview data have shown that the principal is a very strong person. The way in which she runs and controls her school has been identified by some respondents as indicating autocratic practices. Respondents express their views and understanding of “very strong and autocratic” in different ways. Firstly I want to highlight what some authors have to say about autocratic leadership.

According to Bass (1990: 481) autocratic leadership can be understood by looking at how power relations are distributed within the organization; the way in which needs are met and the understanding of the manner in which those needs are distributed. In addition autocratic leadership would explain how decisions are taken. In an autocratic environment power is exercised by the leader in such a way that others within the organization feel their own lack of power or experience the unequal distribution of power. In any organization there are always needs to be satisfied but in an autocratic situation the leader who wields more power, has power to change direction, declare lines of actions to be followed and continues to satisfy his/her needs than those of his followers. The consequence is always that most decisions are made for the benefit of the leader and actions are predetermined.

On the other hand Shaw as cited in Bass (1990) notes some positive features emanating from autocratic leadership. He found that speed and accuracy of group’s performance were sufficiently higher under the autocratic leader than would be the case with the democratic one. He goes on to argue that productivity in the short term may be enhanced more in an autocratic environment.

Another important aspect of autocratic leadership is described by Evetts as quoted in Udjombala (2002: 9) that leaders have to be tough, aggressive, competitive, directive and

autocratic if they hope to deal with and manage change. This position suggests that autocratic leaders have to exert some authority in order that others may be able to follow or may be able to implement decisions the leader takes. This is done so that both internal and the external changes may be managed confidently and more efficiently.

Those who have observed autocratic tendencies can see the Rocklands principal against this description. Mr John, for example sees the toughness of the principal going together with mercy. He therefore takes the view that toughness is necessary to be able to keep the school attractive and admirable. In other words the autocratic tendencies are not negative but have positive spin offs. Mr John says:

And she [the principal] is very strong in her toughness. Despite her strong power, she has vision. She is not only tough, she also has mercy in abundance. She has a foresight and is able to rescue a desperate situation.

Here the toughness of the principal is seen as part of or as embedded in mercy. This seems to justify the “toughness” of the principal. The fact that she has foresight and ability “to rescue a desperate situation” gives more authority and power to the principal. These allow the principal to make decisions that are in line with her “foresight.” Mr John finds justification for the principal to make decisions and to lead upfront with others following and accepting those decisions the leader makes for the benefit of followers. The power to make unilateral decisions is highlighted by Mr John as an example of good leadership. He makes the point:

The second thing is that the principal never hinted to us that she was on a campaign to upgrade the school. We came to realize this quite later and we were happy with what she had done.

One cannot fail to perceive the ambiguity brought about by the autocratic decision of the principal. But, Mr John also looks at the benefits that have accrued as a result of the unilateral decision the principal took. It has had a tremendous impact on the school development and Mr John is happy with it.

Miss Terry also brings in an ambiguous voice when she describes the work the principal does at the school. She says:

She [the principal] can be progressive when she is willing. You see, when she is willing everything and anything can start happening...

The suggestion of progressive outlook for the principal carries with it good intentions that enhance school's stature and assures its advancement in the attainment of good results. But Miss Terry shows that the good part is dependent on the principal's "willingness." The implication is that power to decide, make changes or give direction resides with the principal while the possibility exists for the same principal to be "progressive." Miss Terry continues to have contradictory description of the principal, something that points to an ambiguous disposition arising from the way the autocratic leader is understood. She says:

She [the principal] is very autocratic. ...she is autocratic and she can be very good.

It is difficult, from the tone of her expression, to associate anything good with autocracy but in this instance Miss Terry does not seem to have any problems. This is in line with the authors I have referred to earlier about positive aspects of autocracy they see as good for leadership under certain circumstances. It is important to remember that some regard autocratic rulers as ruthless with uncompromising toughness and determination to have a stronger voice over other people within an organization. This tough picture of a leader is seen by Big Boy as having a bearing on their school life. He explains:

The principal is strong, very strong. We sometimes request to go and practice our play, maybe in preparation for upcoming tournament, and she will straight out refuse. Then we know there is nothing else we can do.

The last sentence here sums up the finality of principal's decision. Learners have to live with the principal's decision whether they like the decision or not. A Head of Department also notes the principal's power and capabilities. She says:

She does not consult anyone on anything. So it is difficult to work with that kind of a person. She is very strong and she is capable...

There is an admission by Miss Smate that the principal has an autocratic way of leadership but this is coupled with the understanding that the principal is highly capable.

In other words the principal can cause things to happen and make a success of it despite her lack of consultation. Girlsie sees the principal's power as beneficial to them as learners and the meaning of autocracy cannot be found to have affected her perception about the principal. She says:

You see, pupils here are governed by strict rules and they know boundaries  
They know what is expected of them ...and they listen.

The fact that learners abide by strong rules is linked with the statement that they are prepared to "listen." The implication is that learners are not rebellious but courteous because they understand the benefits of "strict rules." From trait theory one finds similarities with what happens in an autocratic situation. Trait theory suggests that leaders are imbued with certain leadership qualities that enable them to give direction, make decision for others and also mete out punishment for those who transgress rules or give incentives to those who comply. Bernard as quoted in Horner (1997) argues that the traits that differentiate leaders from their followers can be identified. Those with specific traits could be identified as leaders and be expected to lead in an organization in a certain way.

Bernard as cited in Horner (1997) notes that there is quality difference between those who lead and those who are led. The Rocklands respondents have identified some actions that belong to the principal or actions that can only be associated with leadership. Fullan (2000: 8) adds his voice by arguing that followers grow to accept certain ways of behaving from leaders and do not consider the situation from which leaders operate. It is particularly so when followers expect a leader to be strong in the way he/she handles day-to-day activities. In the case of Rocklands, respondents have identified the strong qualities of the principal and have accepted these as the norm because from the developmental history of the school they have admired the way the principal has been leading. That is why this discussion carries contradictions and ambiguities about this strong and autocratic leader.

From what the respondents have been saying the principal has envisioned a school that is second to none and therefore they have been encouraged by the principal's stance and are prepared to accept the autocratic tendencies or practices as long as they understand these

to be in the interests of the school. I also find that the charismatic practices I have referred to earlier add value to what the principal does. Every teacher and learner knows that the principal goes beyond the call of duty, takes risks and sacrifices a lot for the common good. Christie's study (2001: 49) of resilient schools found examples of nurturing principals who prided themselves in the strength of their resolve to care and support their school communities and their preparedness to defend their schools and what these schools stand for to the bitter end.

### **5.1.9.1 MY OBSERVATIONS**

A few days after my arrival at the school I was struck by the actions of the principal. I reflected on this and this is what I wrote:

The principal is moving from class to class and I can hear her voice dominating in every sphere. Her ideas and views are accepted and implemented by the learners and the teachers. In the meetings I have attended I was always left with the impression that what the principal says is what happens. Teachers always respond in the affirmative. At the end of a meeting the principal's wishes are accommodated. This shows the strength of her voice. Discussions in which all participate shows that teachers are always on the side of the principal.

I have noticed that the principal's philanthropic attitude, her positive exposure and sympathy towards the downtrodden and her readiness to sacrifice time, energy and money has made her a heroine among the school community people. I have observed that a leader like that enjoys support, and her followers do not challenge her ideas because these are regarded as good and worthwhile for the community as a whole.

I found that the principal also played an important role in the transformational process of the school. Decisions taken in meetings were monitored and the principal admonished those who failed to implement the decision. Not only that but she was also ready to advise on way forward whenever there was a failure. I noticed this in June and this is what I wrote:

The principal came back from making the rounds and brought late-comers together. She talked strongly to them about the evils of coming late to

school and ordered them to clean the school as punishment. Then came about six people who claimed to be potential school drivers to attend a meeting with the principal. The issue in the meeting was transport provision for the learners to and from school. There was also a representative from the Department of Education who chaired the meeting. Everybody was briefed by the principal who seemed to have all the relevant information on transporting of school children. The Official was there to clear certain conditions attached to transporting children. The meeting was focusing on what the principal had to say and the drivers were keen to hear the views of the principal than those of the “stranger.”

This example shows how people at Rocklands are prepared to listen to a voice that is known and accept what it says. In Everard and Morris (1996: 45) there is a strong argument for acceptance of dictatorial powers under certain conditions. These authors point out that decisions by the leader could be acceptable to the followers if the leader has “a considerable track record of success, where the leader is acknowledged to be the expert or where there is charisma in the way the leader performs his duties.” They point out that sometimes people may grudgingly accept decisions without being consulted as long as these come from higher level.

I have observed that dictatorial practices of the principal are not the only style of leadership she exercises but it is a combination of a range of styles to enable the principal to deal with different situations.

The categories are now going to be classified under themes that have emerged in this discussion. These themes sum up the role of the principal in a way that the respondents have reacted.

## **5. 2 THEMES**

Themes flow from the categories that have been discussed and they point to the important roles the principal of Rocklands farm school performs. These roles touch on the school effectiveness sub themes because they expose the effort the principal exerts to improve the school situation. I have been able to derive the following themes from this discussion:

- The principal is able to think longer term in the planning and the execution of her duties.

- The principal understands the relationships within the school organization.
- The principal is able to influence the constituents.
- The principal is able to cope with conflicting requirements and
- The principal thinks in terms of renewal.

### **5.2.1 THE PRINCIPAL THINKS LONGER TERM**

Respondents have identified assertiveness and the ability of their leader to take the initiative. The principal is not afraid to tackle new work and is able to motivate the constituents. These efforts suggest the capacity of the leader to see well into the future because there is a plan; there is vision and preparedness to take the bull by the horns, so to speak.

Everard and Morris (1996: 137) point out that thinking longer term means good planning for the organization and the setting up of goals. They argue:

...all organizations ...should actively be managed against goals; not only should there be a clear sense of direction in which the organization is being steered but also markers whereby we can assess progress.

Data have shown that the principal's assertive behaviour is driven by desire to aim for and achieve goals set up for the school. Coupled with this is her ability to motivate teachers, learners and the parents to achieve higher ideals for the school. What has happened is that learners, as a result, have attained good results continuously. When the principal wanted to upgrade the school she talked convincingly to those who would be directly affected and despite some difficulties she experienced pushed on until the school was finally upgraded. The consequence of her convincing discussion was the unwavering support and loyalty from all constituents.

The principal's efforts would have been useless if she was not bold. That is why Deal and Paterson (1999) argue that progressive organizations should have a leader who runs such organization like a business. They point out that:

...leaders know that success flourishes when people are committed, believe in the organization and take pride in their work.

This is true of what has happened in Rocklands where the motivation of teachers and learners has resulted in good performance.

### **5.2.2 THE PRINCIPAL UNDERSTANDS RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN HER SCHOOL.**

The data have shown that the principal is co-operative, she takes and shows care and that she goes out of her way to ensure good working relations. The data pointed to a leader who understands people and how they should be treated in an organization. She has used her knowledge and her understanding of people in an organization to build trust and an atmosphere conducive to good teaching practice.

Teachers who are willing to work hard have emerged from kind of relationships the principal has helped to build. These teachers are willing to do as the principal does. When she decided, for example to teach during holidays teachers have joined in and took the action as necessary. The experience of the principal and her actions in the formative years have convinced the teachers that her examples are worth emulating. Teachers have also decided to be involved and have created their own holiday timetable. This was confirmed by Miss Smate when she noticed actions the teachers were taking while she was still new to the school.

The principal has been talking to the learners about the virtues of respect, diligence and commitment to work and this has led to learners accepting the principal's style of leadership and going along with whatever decisions she makes. This confidence lays the foundation for good organizational relations. Learners like Big Boy and Girlsie have attested to their satisfaction at the manner their principal handles administration and that they have confidence in the way she runs the school.

I have also referred to a good parental support which has been highlighted by Miss Inspector and Mr John. I have also observed that the principal at Rocklands is highly regarded and that every word she utters is taken very seriously and respected. With this

kind of atmosphere prevailing at the school good working relations thrive and the school's capacity to produce good results is enhanced. Sergiovanni (2001) describes this good relationship within the school as "positive school climate" which leads to school effectiveness. He continues:

... [such] schools have a sense of order, purpose and direction fostered by consistency among teachers; an atmosphere of encouragement in which students are praised and rewarded; a work centered environment and high optimism and expectation of student learning.

This description fits into the actions that have been undertaken by the Rocklands principal. These actions serve to support the school's good performance. Blase and Blase (1999: 132) go a step further in that they see the creation of good relations as an outcome of the instructional leader. They point out that an instructional leader advances the cause of leadership by encouraging participants in the running of the institution.

I have noted in my observation that the school, even in the absence of the principal runs smoothly because everyone knows what to do and does not depend on the principal's constant supervision to carry out tasks allocated to him/her.

### **5.2.3 THE PRINCIPAL IS ABLE TO INFLUENCE CONSTITUENTS**

The data show that the work the principal does and the sacrifices she makes send good signals to learners, teachers, parents and the Department of Education to do their best in support of the principal. The support assures the principal that the followers are convinced by her messages and actions and that in return, they show genuine commitment. At some point this high level of support is tantamount to hero-worshipping because the principal's work is a shining example of selflessness.

The principal has been able to talk to teachers, learners, parents and Departmental officials and all of them have been convinced by the principal's persuasive arguments on issues that affect the smooth running of the school. I have already referred to the principal's dominant voice which is supported by all because she has the astuteness to explain what she wants in an interesting way thereby soliciting support from every one. I

have referred to the voice of the principal in meetings where she introduces issues, make suggestions and asks for consensus. All this happens around the suggestions she has made and the consequence is that all in the meeting end up agreeing with her views.

The powerful influence the principal has is noted by Miss Smate and Miss Terry. They have observed that teachers at the end act in concert in supporting the principal's ideas without raising objections. The fact that the principal according to Everard and Morris (1996) has a good track record, that she knows the history of the school and has wide experience in governance have been important elements to convince others to fall in line and support the principal's efforts. This stems from the belief that the principal, who knows what she is doing will not mislead them. So what the principal does in her quest to improve the farm school's situation gets unequivocal support because she is experienced and knowledgeable about what she does.

It is also worth noting that the principal has been found to have charismatic leadership qualities because she has sacrificed her time, energy and money for the benefit of the school without expecting rewards in return. This action has spoken louder in the minds of the followers and has served to elevate the principal's stature among the teaching fraternity grouping. For example she has paid out of her own pocket volunteering parents who, for the first time in the history of farm schools, made themselves available to handle preschool education despite the fact that farm school parents did not have enough money to have the preschool running. This act by the principal became a strong voice that persuaded others to support the principal even more. The farm manager, Mr Charliwood, Mr John, Miss Inspector and Miss Tops have all corroborated the sacrificial actions that the principal has undertaken. These have happened with the principal expecting nothing from the followers in return.

The community members also realize that the actions by the principal always end with the school performing wonderfully well compared with other schools, even those that are well-resourced. The parents of Rocklands are then able to boast about their good principal and are prepared to support her without fear or favour. Burns as cited in Smyth

(1984: 41) sums up the action by the principal as an ability to motivate others so that they too can act without self-interest for the general good of the organization.

#### **5.2.4 THE PRINCIPAL COPES WITH CONFLICTING REQUIREMENTS**

The ability of the principal to resolve conflicts has been revealed by the data. In every organization there are always tensions and misunderstanding of one form or the other and these are brought about by a variety of reasons. Most conflicts have both rational and emotional components and these may lie somewhere between genuine conflicts of interest on the one hand and personality clashes on the other. Everard and Morris (1996) are convinced that an organization and leadership need to deal with conflict as an on-going exercise since they believe that there could be no organization without elements of conflict. They say:

Absence of conflict may indicate abdication of responsibility, lack of interest or lazy thinking.

The reason that the principal is working on problem-solving constantly is because of her realization of the potential problem that exists in an organization; problems which demand constant vigilance. The principal of Rocklands had to work during a period of tremendous change in education for South Africa just before and after the 1994 elections. At the same time she had to change the mindsets of farm school community members so that they could accept a new school format and outlook, from a primary school to an intermediate school that combines with a vibrant secondary school phase. This could happen because the principal had embodied transformational qualities needed for one to cause and manage change. Horner (1997: 287) says that changes taking place outside the organization as well as inside the organization call for transformational leadership that is capable of ensuring that transition is and can be well managed.

Starting from the learner behaviour the principal has laid out the rules and those who transgress the rules get admonished or punished as the case may be. The attention given to those who cause conflict is quick and purposeful. There is no procrastination and learners have already indicated that their aim is to comply and they do so willingly

because they have witnessed schools where discipline has broken down with resultant chaos. Miss Inspector has also highlighted the quick action of the principal in dealing with conflict situations and the efficient way she deals with it.

Miss Inspector has illustrated how some ill-informed parents were angry at the principal's involvement in transport because they viewed her involvement as an obstructionist ploy designed to deny ordinary drivers the lucrative transport service delivery business. They argued that she was employed and that she should have allowed those who were not employed to participate in the deal. This needed an explanation from the chairperson and the principal in order that the concerned parents could understand. It also transpired that that was not the parents' original idea to challenge the situation but that it came from somewhere outside the school community. A potentially damaging situation was resolved by explanation and this saved the day.

The principal at one stage faced redeployment problems but she stood her ground when it became clear that she was going to be given teachers that were not going to be effective in her school despite the insistence of Departmental officials. But with the support of the farm manager and the parents the principal was able to retain a teacher that was destined for redeployment from her school. If the principal had not stood her ground the school would have lost a good teacher and at the same time received inappropriate teachers for the school.

According to Giddens as cited in Smyth (1989: 28) the problems and conflict situations that arise from time to time show that the social world is in a continuous state of becoming. Morgan as cited in Smyth (1989) explains tensions and conflicts as a schismatic metaphor. This presumes that an organization has a tendency to move towards disintegration while the resolution of tensions and conflicts give rise to new unity and a better-managed organization.

### **5.2.5 THE PRINCIPAL THINKS IN TERMS OF RENEWAL**

The data has provided transformational actions which pointed to the principal's readiness to face the future with confidence. The fact that the principal is willing to try new strategies illustrates her eagerness to change the situation for the better through innovative actions. Christie's study of resilient schools brought to light some of the struggles these principals went through but their determination to change the situation could not be defeated. One principal is quoted as saying: "We had our problems but we are surviving" (Christie 2001: 45).

Christie describes these schools as vulnerable and struggling. Despite these problems these schools were showing that resilience and ability to survive were not attributes that were possessed in static or permanent way. These were on-going and they were elements that ensured a better future for the learners.

The data show that the Rocklands principal works for changes in order to improve the school environment. She started way back with sporting activities to change the "dull nature" of the farm school. The result was that in no time the school linked up with others thereby breaking its own isolation. The school achieved success in sporting codes because learners went into these activities full of enthusiasm and determination. A winning spirit was engendered and learners had their world changing for the better and were looking into the future with confidence.

The principal with the Governing Council changed the meeting schedules so that they could reach every parent with the latest information regarding the progress the school was making. The intention was to solicit parental support and to ensure that the principal could "venture into new territory" with full parental backing. All these activities point to the belief the principal had in changing things for the better or renewal. She planned very well in advance as Miss Smate has noted. Christie (2001: 49) found in her study that leaders working on the renewal and rejuvenation of their schools were "energetic and visionary individuals who enlivened their schools and engaged actively with their surrounding communities."

The principal of Rocklands has shown great concern for the well-being of the school and this has driven to work on renewal strategies. These strategies, some of which I have already mentioned, were aimed at keeping the school performing well despite its depressing environmental conditions. A leader with a renewal outlook has transformational qualities and is able to change seriously challenging conditions into a worthwhile environment for all. Part of the principal's winning strategy is illustrated by Miss Inspector. She notes:

What she [principal] used to do was... eh... was... She never told teachers what to do or how things are done. She initiated things. she served as a role model.

The idea that the principal "initiates things" suggests that she moves into new areas all the time and ensures that new ideas, views and actions are accepted and implemented for the benefit of all. The principal is always looking at ways of improving her school and her closeness to the parents, the Departmental Officials and the farm manager ensures that her ventures succeed. Bolam as cited in Dunham (1995) explains the good effect of well-managed initiatives that serve to rejuvenate schools. He points out that the principal and the management teams must help in reducing stress among staff members when new ways of doing things are introduced. Concern and considerations for the well being of teachers who have to implement new ways of acting need to be exercised as a reassuring gesture so that the potential energies of teachers can be unleashed.

The willingness of the principal to solve problems as they appear and her readiness to assist staff members at meetings has had a positive feedback and mean that the school has continued to make progress. Sergiovanni (2001) says leaders can make a difference by taking responsibility for building their own capacity more effectively. This suggests self assessment and capacity building courses aimed at improving managing schools effectively.

The themes I have discussed here come from the categories I discussed earlier. There are linkages between themes as well as among categories. I have referred earlier to the

overlapping that constantly appears in my discussion. I have already pointed out that this is due to the closeness of categories causing data to overlap without losing the original meaning and the context within which the participants responded. I want to illustrate briefly how this overlap has occurred.

### **5.3 THE OVERLAPPING DATA IN CATEGORIES**

The data, which led to the emergence of categories, show that the data are not mutually exclusive. I have experienced the same thing with the themes which were eventually derived from the discussed categories. In the discussion of categories some statements made by respondents qualify for one or more categories. This is caused by the close relationship between categories and the slightly different meanings derived from the same statements. I believe that this has also been caused by the wide-ranging discussions I had with the respondents centered on the role of the principal. There has been overlap in that some statements fit into different categories without losing their contextual content. I will be citing some examples of these occurrences to show how this was possible.

One category that deals with the principal as assertive and not intimidated has led to the strong belief that she was very strong and autocratic. Statements by the respondents on the two categories move from one category and strengthen the other. Others see the fact that the principal is capable of taking the initiative as indicating signs of autocratic rule. Another example is that I have discussed the principal's charismatic qualities as provided by the data. I have shown how these qualities are embedded in transformational leadership. The charismatic actions of the principal have led some respondents to believe that this is because she cares and is co-operative. These are different categories which derive their information from the same source but with a different slant. The efforts of the principal in going the extra mile even to personal costs is also seen by respondents as an attempt to create order in her school. Love of order is another category that emerged from the data but depending on the perspective the participant approaches the discussion love for order and charismatic qualities will be highlighted from the same data source.

Another example is the category in which the principal is found to have capacity to solve problems and her readiness to become proactive in pursuit of solutions. When the principal went out to solve problems and spent time with teachers and learners to assist them in the resolution of problems, this is easily seen by other respondents as motivational activity that prepares both teachers and learners for greater involvement in improving the school life. The principal as a motivator is a different category but part of the data from which it is derived is shared with problem-solving actions.

It is important to note that each category is derived from different data and the issue of overlap refers to few statements from some respondents that may pass for other categories.

The role of the principal of Rocklands farm school was studied against the school's ability to produce good results. I want to refer to the school effectiveness as the main objective towards which the principal directed her effort at Rocklands. The fact that learners were able to gain good results is a platform on which I am trying to understand the role of the principal.

#### **5.4 THEMES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS**

Themes here serve as a form of summary that has been derived from the categories. The themes emerging here point to the roles of the principal in an academically successful farm school. I have worked out these categories and the subsequent themes from the data provided by the interviews and the participant observation information. Particular interest at this school is directed to its capacity to produce good results despite its deprived environment as a farm school.

School effectiveness literature, though it differs on how it defines school effectiveness, seems to accept some of the essential aspects that point towards school effectiveness. I want to use the examples cited by Christie (2001) in her study of resilient schools as the bases for understanding some of the important elements. She has found that the following aspects go a long way into explaining effective schools:

- Centrality of teaching and learning
- A high sense of responsibility
- Good and strong leadership
- Respect of authority and discipline
- Good governance and parental involvement

What is critical here is that these elements lead to good learner performance. Hayden and Thompson (1997) sum the common focus of school effectiveness as essentially making use of an outcomes oriented approach. Schreens and Bosker as cited in Hayden and Thompson (2000: 1997: 26) seem to confirm this position. They argue:

An important characteristic of the school effectiveness is that it uses an outcomes measure as its criterion, that is adjusted for prior achievement and or other relevant student background characteristics. In this way the added value of schooling can be separated from overall development or innate growth of students.

Cohn and Rossmiller (1987: 381) take a similar view because they say:

Most of the research on the outcomes of schooling has focused on on cognitive knowledge as a measure by standardized tests. Thus effective schools have been defined primarily in terms of gains in cognitive knowledge rather than by broader more inclusive measures of the outcomes of schooling.

In the case of Rocklands farm school the results for standard ten in the past 5 years have stayed at the peak of 100% pass rate. The Department of Education in the Eastern Cape and other various community groups have praised the school's outstanding performance and the school has received awards as a recognition of good work from some organizations. Rocklands farm school is now regarded as one of the best schools in the Eastern Cape because "the gains in cognitive knowledge" by the standard ten learners seem to be an indicator of good practice. I have already indicated what goes into school effectiveness by citing some examples from Christie, which emerge from studies of resilient schools.

Rockland farm school, like all farm schools faces very difficult problems and the school's performance suggests that it has tried to overcome these difficulties by the wonderful results of the most senior class in the school. I need to highlight some of the problems as forming part of the contextual factors that I have observed during my stay at the school. These problems are common to most farm schools and are cited in Hartshorne (1992: 134) and in Draft Report on Farm Schools (1995). The principal and teachers had to work against these problems. They have tried to solve some while they have made adjustment for those that could not be solved. I discuss them in the following section as contextual factors that have impacted on Rocklands Farm School in certain ways:

## **5.5 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**

### **5.5.1 TRANSPORT**

Although the transporting of Black learners from their homes to school has been almost non-existent the principal of Rocklands tried to talk to some farmers and other local drivers to assist in the transport of learners. This attempt was not regular and it did not produce the required results however, there was a steady flow of learners to the school, which meant that the school was able to run without undue disruption caused by poor attendance. The principal also assisted by making her vehicles available for the transporting of learners and this helped in alleviating an age-old problem of poor attendance in farm schools.

### **5.5.2 POVERTY**

Poverty seems endemic in the farming areas but the principal of Rocklands tried to alleviate the hardship by constantly asking for sponsorships, requesting assistance from the state agencies and seeking support from private sector groups. As a result of these initiatives the principal has been able to secure some teaching materials and school equipment from these groups without causing added strain on poor parents by demanding that they pay for these facilities. Another important factor has been the involvement of

the farm manager who has used his contacts very well so that the school could have more and better school classes built. Parents were again saved from paying for the erection of the new classes.

### **5.5.3 TEACHERS WHO ARE UNDER- AND UNQUALIFIED IN FARM SCHOOLS**

Farm schools have not attracted many qualified teachers. Those who were qualified did not choose farms as teaching areas, it was because farm schools were isolated and environmentally depressed areas. It was only those who were poorly qualified who hoped to get employed in these farms. The shortage of teachers in the farm areas was so great that at times those without any teaching qualifications were allowed to teach. The result was poor quality of teaching and a poor learning environment for these schools. The smaller number of learners in farm schools compared to urban schools meant that there would be multi-grade classes in which two or more standards were handled by one teacher in one class. The effect was that learners from these types of classes could not get the full attention they deserved as learners. Krause (1997) calls these farm school classes multi-standard classrooms.

### **5.5.4 INCONSIDERATE FARM SCHOOL MANAGERS**

Farm school managers were not seriously concerned about or interested in the education of the farm school children. They were primarily interested in ensuring that they had a pool of potential workers. In some farming areas children were used during harvesting period to the detriment of their own education. With the feudal type of control over farm workers and their children education did not mean anything worthwhile other than to read write and count for the benefit of the farmer (Gordon: 1987: 51).

The principal of Rocklands with the assistance of Department of Education was able to get full support from the farm manager. This critical support ensured that a number of

stumbling blocks would be removed for the successful engagement. The principal utilized the services of the farm manager to the full and this has enabled her school to grow from strength to strength. The farm manager did not impose himself on the school but rather worked most of the time behind the scenes to provide some of the essential services the school needed.

### **5.5.5 POOR MATERIAL RESOURCES FOR FARM SCHOOLS**

Rocklands farm school, just like most farm schools was poorly resourced with a serious lack of teaching material, books for learners and other schooling requirements that are mostly responsible for an effective school teaching. The principal narrated how she went out of her way to get books for learners from other schools and the Department of Education offices. She also used Government agencies to help her with the essential equipments for her school. The response was always good and particularly so when the school produced good results.

### **5.5.6 POOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Cohn and Rossmiller (1987: 387) have found that:

Parental involvement and support are often listed as important organizational variables. Several researchers have found parental involvement and support to be important factors in student achievement.

In farm schools this important factor was missing or at best had very little impact on the schooling of learners. The parental voice was ineffective and the parents themselves did not feel comfortable with school involvement because they were dealing with something that they were not exposed to. Most parents were illiterate and could not derive pleasure in dealing with school matters. They always thought that any thing to do with school was the domain of teachers and the principal. The previous legislation which gave the farm manager power on governance of schools meant that parents were simply rubber-stamping what the manager was saying. This was also due to power relations that put

farm labourers at a serious disadvantage (Gordon 1987, Hartshorne 1992, Draft Report on Farm schools 1995, Unterhalter *et al.*1991).

## **5.6 ROCKLANDS FARM SCHOOL AND SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS**

I have found and observed that the school did not only fight to rid itself of the common problems found in farm schools but also that it had a principal whose visionary stance and determination impacted positively on the school's progress. Christie (2001: 49) found that good leadership plays a key role in the improvement of the situation in schools. She noted in her studies of resilient schools that "there were many examples of energetic and visionary individuals who enlivened their schools and engaged actively with their surrounding communities."

Rocklands respondents have shown that their school is indeed effective in the way it is run and the proof is in the results of standard ten learners. Hayden and Thompson (2000) categorize some criteria of school effectiveness as critical measure for identifying schools that are effective. I want to highlight in this discussion issues the respondents have identified that are similar to Hayden and Thompson's categories.

### **5.6.1 PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Bossert *et al.* as quoted in Hayden and Thompson (2000: 3) argue that school effectiveness depends on the leader being the "crucial factor" but these authors also point out that no simple style of leadership seems appropriate. A leader uses the styles that suit him/her in his/her local situation. At Rocklands learners and teachers acknowledge the principal's involvement in actual teaching. This comes from Miss Smate, Big Boy and Girlsie. The principal is known to teach "and she teaches well" according to Big Boy. There are pointers to the fact that the principal is deeply embedded in the teaching profession and she knows how to conduct herself in her school and outside the school. This finds support from Miss Inspector when she says that the principal regards everyone

as a resource and that she goes out “to show how it is done” so that “others may follow.” What also underlies the professional efficiency is the clear vision the principal has for the school as well as the co-operation she enjoys from all involved.

### **5.6.2 A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

I have referred to the good learning environment created by the principal in her pursuit of professional leadership. This was reciprocated by learners who accepted discipline and were also prepared to learn. In any successful schools teaching and learning are central for the education business to succeed (Christie 2001: 46). The attempt by the principal of Rocklands “to motivate these learners” and to “talk to teachers” point to an integrated effort aimed at good learning environment. Most respondents have acknowledged that the principal works hard to create a conducive atmosphere for effective learning. Big Boy, for example, has highlighted the maintenance of discipline and the respect accorded the principal by learners as crucial ingredient for a successful school. It is the respect from parents as well that ensures a good atmosphere for learning.

### **5.6.3 HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

The principal of Rocklands has worked very hard because she wants to see her learners passing with flying colours at the end of the year. Hayden and Thompson (2000: 5) regard high expectations as born out of an interrelatedness of factors necessary for school effectiveness. They say that high expectations would operate most positively in an atmosphere where strong emphasis is on academic achievement; where there is an orderly environment good for learning. It must also be in an atmosphere where monitoring of learners work is an on-going practice.

Some of the actions by the principal cited by respondents indicates her vision and high expectations. Her involvement in solving transport problems for example, bears testimony to her wish to see uninterrupted schooling that increases winning chances for learners.

Miss Tops decided long before she became a principal of the school to upgrade the school and to seek the full support of the farm manager without whom some of the dreams she had would not have been realized. All these actions were interrelated and helped in strengthening her resolve to get good results and thereby increased her resolve to fulfill her high expectations.

#### **5.6.4 POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT**

The principal at Rocklands farm school has been motivating everyone for the attainment of good results and the response of the school community members has been very good. Respondents have identified their principal as a good motivator. Mr John and Miss Inspector have identified this motivating spirit and they have reasoned that it was because the principal wanted a good performing school. Her efforts have served as positive reinforcement in that the school has accepted the principal's motivational actions with the result that school performance has continued to improve.

Herzberg as cited in Everard and Morris (1996: 29) state that "if relationships and motivations are good people will readily accept and overcome some administrative or environmental flaws." He goes on to say that people's needs for achievement, personal growth and advancement potential are unlocked by motivation which acts as a positive reinforcement.

#### **5.6.5 HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP**

Mortimore *et al.* (1988) found that positive benefits are gained if parents are part of school teaching environment or attend meetings concerned with their children's work and are involved in school's extra-curricular activities. He argues that such involvement contributes to school effectiveness. At Rocklands farm school Mr John, Miss Inspector and Mr Charliwood have seen the benefits derived from parental involvement because in every walk of life of Rocklands there are parents involved. Teachers are in constant

contact and are able to share issues connected with learners' progress. The parents are able to give the kind of support that the teachers need for the school to be successful. This is particularly interesting at Rocklands, more so when one considers that parental involvement prior to Miss Tops' take over was almost non-existent. Parents in farm schools always felt alienated because schooling was an area they did not know much about and the nature of their work did not encourage further studying or any further linkage with education. The farm manager was also a critical factor in the alienation of parents from schooling of their children because they only served as possible rubber-stamping individuals (Gordon 1987).

Miss Tops had to address this problem by talking to the parents and also devising a better method of meeting parents without them having to suffer financially. The idea of holding smaller meetings in areas where parents live has boosted the parental involvement, had augmented participation and their interest in the education of their children has widened. Christie (2001: 57) stresses the importance of parental involvement in her study of resilient schools and she points out that schools that depended on community support as a source of their strength in their operations were likely to perform well.

## **5.7 ROCKLANDS FARM SCHOOL AND THE WOMAN PRINCIPAL**

The data did on the whole, not suggest that the actions of the principal were due to the fact that she was a woman. I want to highlight that on few occasions the actions of the principal confirmed the perception that she acted because she was a woman. For example a teacher from her school gave a report on condition of anonymity to the District office of Education that the principal and the standard 10 learners were engaged in some form of cheating. The principal did not discuss this allegation with the male EDO who was responsible for her school until a lady EDO substituted the male EDO. She opened up with the woman EDO because she "felt comfortable" to discuss the sensitive issue with another woman. The principal believed that the woman EDO, Miss Inspector, would "understand her better." Miss Inspector confirmed this when she explained in detail the "cheating report" and the subsequent investigation by the Department of Education.

After the investigation which did not find fault with her and the school, she became withdrawn to some extent. This view was expressed by Miss Inspector. The principal decided to bottle some of her feelings. Miss Inspector believes that this could be the reason why her health deteriorated after the investigations.

The data provided an indication that at times women principals lead in a certain way that may be different from that of men. Dinkmeyer 1996, Shakeshaft 1989, Hall 1996 have also expressed similar views about the fact that women lead differently from men. Some of the following points find support from these authors:

- Women favour collaborative management
- Women support team work
- Women encourage shared decision-making
- Women use consultation and delegation extensively
- Women encourage participative leadership

These points are however, opposed by Greenfield in Cahill 1994, Kouzes and Posner in Hesselbein, Goldsmith and Beckhard 1996, and Kimbrough and Buckett 1990. They argue that any person can be a leader as long as they give the best from themselves and for others and as long as they develop themselves as leaders.

Kimbrough and Buckett (1990) state that leadership emerges in the social system and may be contingent upon many factors. Most of what emerges from the data about the Rocklands principal seems to be dependent on the individual and the circumstances that have shaped the individual. The principal's performance cannot be viewed, according to these authors, from the fact that the leader of the school is a woman. Kimbrough and Buckett (1990: 108) view leadership styles as emanating from multiple variables as well as from a leader who has a particular disposition. In support of this view Kauaria (2002: 15) states that context and personal qualities of the leader rather than checklist of characteristics determine what the leaders eventually think or do.

The data also revealed a strong and autocratic leader. These attributes have always been linked with tough men within the trait theory. I observed that Miss Tops could act like a man according to authors who believed in differentiated roles between males and females. Her actions in Rocklands Farm School of making unilateral decisions, not consulting, issuing instructions without explanation suggest that she challenged the notion that only men could show toughness and aggressiveness. Meena (1992: 43) found characterization descriptors are actually helping in “essentializing and naturalizing” women and therefore, are stereotyping men and women leaders into different types of actors.

The principal’s actions and her personal feelings have shaped the way she governed her school and that her gender, according to these authors, did not have any determinant factor on what she did or did not do. This argument is inadequate because the data showed, for example, the principal discussing “cheating” with another woman and not with the male EDO. This points to the gender-related action and decision the principal undertook to solve a problem.

## **5.8 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN ROCKLANDS FARM SCHOOL**

The principal of Rocklands Farm School faces a number of challenges in her school and this demands a person with disposition that accommodates transformational qualities particularly if the aim of the principal is to change the situation of a farm school for the better. In a school environment there are bureaucratic linkages the principal has to maintain as a transactional leader. Boys (2002: 27) points out that effective principals perform both bureaucratic transactions as well as culture-building strategies to improve school effectiveness. The Rocklands Farm School principal selected those practices she regarded conducive to good learning environment and discarded those she thought would not further her aims and objectives. She did all these by involving the Rocklands Farm School community because she believed in shared beliefs, shared values and rituals. This also suggests that the principal had to thread more carefully so as not to upset the delicate balance of cultural practices on one hand and cultural innovations on the other.

The actions of the Rocklands Farm School principal according to Deal (1987) had to take into account that the history of the school which had to be recreated, the shared values that had to be articulated, heroes and heroines that had to be celebrated and rituals that had to be reinvigorated.

The data revealed that the members of the Rocklands farming community were proud of their school's history which could be traced back to the 1950's. They noted various actions taken to improve the school and its operations. The current incumbent is one of the major contributors to the school's evolutionary progress. The progress and implementation of changes were made possible by the support the principal enjoyed from Rocklands farming community. The way she handled communication channels and attempts she made in fulfilling promises she made ensured that people's hopes, wishes and values were appreciated by the principal.

The principal used morning assemblies as a platform to motivate teachers and learners alike. She emphasized those things she regarded as important and made her ideas explicit on those things that needed to be done. As a change agent she had to make sure that Rocklands Farm School community understood her intentions. This in turn helped her to gain the people's support, a vital ingredient for effecting change.

According to Deal and Paterson (1990: 4) a leader may increase the chances of successful cultural change if he/she is able to show through her/his actions that the four approaches for maintaining cohesion in an organizational can be detected. I have observed that the data reveals the principal's capacity in showing that these approaches can be discerned from her actions. These approaches are:

- Human resource perspective
- Formal structure and operation of school
- Political perspective
- Symbolic perspective

Firstly the principal of Rocklands Farm School has made sure that capable people were utilized and that adequately qualified teachers were employed to ensure that human resources were used efficiently and effectively.

Secondly the principal has ensured that her links with the District Office, implementation of Departmental policies and liaison with other interested groups is done smoothly so as not to cause conflict or raise unnecessary concerns. Her daily linkage with District Office ensured that the structures of bureaucracy were properly informed and that different positions people held within the school were in good communication.

Thirdly the principal has used her position to link with different stakeholders, those in the education field and those from outside education, whose interest in the school activities is important. She made a point of requesting support from these organizations in cash or in kind in return for hard work and good feedback.

Fourthly the principal has been able to interpret the farm school life in a manner that seeks to improve the community's way of life. Deal and Paterson regard it as the ability to "decode" the organizational culture with the view to change it for the better.

## **5.9 SUMMARY**

I have discussed categories as concrete evidence by respondents of what the principal in that school does. The actions of the principal begin to explain the roles she has played and continues to play in the development of Rocklands farm school. I have identified nine categories that are closely related but serve distinct purposes in describing the principal's quest for a good and well managed school.

I have found that the principal's assertiveness, initiative and lack of fear are closely linked qualities that make her unique in her approach to farm school problems. She has been able to start new things, do the unexpected and sacrifice her time and money in pursuit of good school performance. The respondents have identified the principal as co-

operative and noted that the success of her ventures depended on her opening lines of communication with everyone involved. She has also liaised with private and state agencies the farm manager and parents with the purpose of gaining support to maintain and advance the school's vision.

I have found the respondents stressing the principal's passion for the welfare and well being of teachers and learners and her resolute belief in orderliness in conducting her educational enterprise. She has gone out to instill a sense of responsibility among teachers and learners and her effort has been rewarded by an unwavering support from these people.

The principal has been found to be a hard worker who is constantly active and who wants to see progress. The respondents noted that the principal spent a lot of time working late hours at the school. She also spent a lot of time when extra-curricular activities demanded teachers to be even closer to the learners.

The data has shown that the actions of the principal are charismatic and they have served to strengthen the belief and confidence people have in the principal. People began to realize that she was going the extra mile without expecting gain or compensation. What the principal did to solve the transport problem for example has shown that the charismatic qualities she had were helpful and sacrificial.

The principal has been found to be a great motivator and to have transformational qualities as well. The changes she brought into her school benefited the people of Rocklands. The school had moved through all stages till it became one of the few high schools in a farming area because of the principal's vision, drive and determination to change the poor state of the school for the better. She has talked to everyone associated with the school with the intention of gaining people's support and this she got overwhelmingly

The principal has been involved with problem solving actions since she started the school and her efforts have been noted by the respondents as means of deepening interest for

school activities as well as of gaining more support. Her actions have been identified as a manifestation of visionary and strong leadership. Her track record has been a motivating phenomenon because it depicts a person who is active in solving difficulties confronting the farm school.

The principal has worked hard to create good working relations among all people linked to Rocklands farm school. The respondents agreed that the principal succeeded in bringing the farm manager closer to the school and has successfully opened lines of communications with teachers and the parents as well as the Department of Education. All these groups have ensured that the efforts of the principal are not in vain.

Respondents have found that the principal was strong in the way she ran her school and showed as a result, some autocratic qualities. The data showed that respondents viewed autocratic handling of issues as necessary if the school was to be successful in its educational engagement particularly if the school operated in a hostile farm school environment. The respondents described the principal in ambiguous terms to strengthen their belief that autocratic inclinations were justified if circumstances were difficult.

From these categories I have developed five themes that serve to sum up the various categories. The themes also describe the role of the principal as she is viewed against a successful farm school.

The principal is able to think in longer terms because she has plans and she has vision which is reflected in such actions as building of new classes, maintenance of order and discipline to ensure good results

The principal is able to operate successfully because she understands relationships. She creates a conducive atmosphere for dialogue among stakeholders and she ensures that the teaching and learning situation is as good as is possible. The principal enjoys support because she knows how to approach people and knows how to build confidence among all stakeholders. For example she knew that if she could win the support of the farm manager many things in her school would be possible to achieve.

The principal has worked hard to motivate others and has served as a role model because she did not fail to bring fresh ideas and solicited other people's opinions. She succeeded in changing other farm school people's mindsets so that changes could be welcomed and supported. Her transformational and charismatic qualities have continued to enjoy support from parents and teachers. These qualities have also helped followers to reciprocate in a positive way. She has demonstrated her commitment by ensuring that all difficulties were discussed, solved or cleared as the case may be. In return the farm school community has played its part as a show of support and appreciation.

The principal has dealt with conflicting demands by applying her mind to problems and has been astute in differentiating between those that are essential and those that could be discarded or shelved. Respondents have shown how the principal had to choose between what is in the interest of the school and what is not and has won appreciation from teachers, parents and learners alike. Part of her problem-solving efforts was directed at solving conflicting issues, which brought dilemma in her administration.

The principal's effort at Rocklands was to ensure that all things possible are made new or changed for the better. She assisted teachers in changing their teaching methods to improve learners' skills. When she joined the school there were no sporting activities and she changed all that. She did this in such a way that the whole community was appreciative and encouraging so much so that learners were able to collect trophies because of their determination to win.

I have shown that the data from which categories and themes are derived tend to overlap. Data appears in more than one category depending on the issue being discussed, but I have made sure that the context from which it is taken is not lost. This shows the interrelatedness of categories. The actions of the principal tend to serve more than one purpose depending on the context in which the action is performed. I have demonstrated that co-operative actions, for example, may show how the principal cares and how this care leads to order. These are two categories in which the actions of the principal are seen

to be serving both categories. As the data may pass for both categories the important thing to realize in that these are also closely linked and integrated.

I have looked at themes and how they relate to school effectiveness. The role of the principal is studied and seen against the school effectiveness background because this is the principal who has run an academically successful school. I have looked at how these themes strengthen school effectiveness at Rocklands and how literature supports the views that have emerged from respondents and my observations. The Rocklands farm school has pursued school effectiveness through the actions of the principal. The school as a result has produced outstanding performances. The five themes seem to concur with school effectiveness studies in that they point to some of the important characteristics of a good school and therefore show ways of school improvement.

I looked at the gender issues and determined whether these have had any direct influence on the principal's actions at Rocklands Farm School. The data revealed that there were gender-related actions although the overall performance of the principal could not be ascribed to the fact that she was a woman. The views expressed seemed to suggest that the principal's actions were contingent upon her personal disposition and the circumstances under which she operated.

Finally I looked at the organizational culture and determined how the principal operated to make her school successful. I looked at whether she had had any meaningful contribution in changing the culture of the school. The data revealed that her leadership styles have enabled her to change the culture of the school without causing disruption because she had support from the Rocklands community. This meant that her school operated like a well-oiled machine because she was even capable of dealing with outside influences well with a very good measure of success.

In the final chapter I highlight my main findings and make recommendations for practice and further research.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This study is an investigation of a principal's role in an academically successful farm school. I have interviewed 8 people who belonged to the school community with the view that they explain on their own terms how they perceive their leader's roles in the general running of the school.

I have been able through this study to gather interesting information about the principal and how the principal has tried to weather the storm of poverty to a great extent in this farming community. I have also noted how the principal was involved in changing the depressing environmental situation of a farm school into one of the vibrant learning centres where excellence is strived for by parents, teachers and learners alike. This has also been possible because of the support of the Educational Officials and other private sector agencies.

My involvement in the school as a participant observer has offered me a better understanding of what goes on in the Rocklands community. This has also helped me to understand the positions from which the respondents say the things they said. I have been able to strengthen the views they have expressed by referring to my own observations and reflections in order to recapture the context in which all actions and expressions were made.

There are critical and important issues that have emerged from this study that I would like to point out because they have a bearing on the role of the principal. Some of these issues highlight the environment within which the principal has exercised her different leadership roles.

## **6.1 CRITICAL ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE STUDY**

I wish to note that this kind of study is rare in that no other study of similar nature has been conducted in South Africa. One other feature of interest in this study is that it is conducted in an academically successful farm school. This is also something that is not prevalent in South Africa. This suggests that there will be limited access to similar work to draw comparisons or similarities from. I have found that the following issues stand out as of critical importance because they identify some key roles for a successful school.

### **6.1.1 GOOD LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The way in which the farm school is run and the overall control the principal exercises over the whole school suggests a very strong capacity to lead. The principal talks to all stakeholders and motivates all of them particularly teachers and learners so that they can perform at their level best. The principal's power and influence at this school has enabled it to stabilise its own environmental factors thereby creating the good atmosphere for teaching and learning. It has been shown by all respondents that the principal leads by example she set. She serves as a role model to teachers, learners and parents. Many within this farming community look to the principal for guidance and inspiration. Purkey and Smith (1983) stress the importance of site leadership and management as crucial and necessary characteristics for effective schools.

### **6.1.2 CO-OPERATION WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

The success story of Rocklands farm school has depended to a large extent on the co-operative spirit the principal has engendered and nurtured within the area. The co-operative spirit is motivated by what Bass (1990: 117) regards as empathetic attitude. He throws some light on what leaders should know:

It is not enough for a leader to know how to get what followers want, or to tell them how to get what they want. The leader must

be able to know what followers want, when they want it and what prevents them from getting what they want...

In ensuring that she gets to know what the people want the principal found it worthwhile and advantageous to be on good terms with learners. The learners in turn know what the principal wanted and have responded positively while giving the principal the respect she deserves. Learners have supported the principal, more so when they realized that their wants were being attended to and fulfilled.

The principal has also co-operated with teachers by calling meetings at which she made her wants and wishes explicit. She consequently won the support of teachers. Teachers were allowed to run the school in various capacities and this has had overwhelming support from teachers because they have allowed the principal to take the lead and depended on her guidance. Her presence in and around school has assured teachers both young and old that there was always someone to be trusted.

The principal has found it prudent and beneficial to liaise with parents. She has called them to meetings and when this seemed to be failing she devised a better method of meeting parents by going to areas where parents stay. She did this to alleviate costs as well. The farm school parents had their eyes opened by the principal and they supported the school's efforts. In a farming community this was the first visible involvement of parents which helped them to feel that they were now part of the education process rather than the "rubber stamps" I have referred to in the data discussion. In other words, the involvement of parents in the education of their children has had a liberating effect (Ndlazi 1999: 101) which changed the farm school outlook and engendered a sense of pride. Parents as a result of the co-operative spirit were now able to make decisions about their school and about their children. In return the parents supported the principal in all her efforts aimed at improving the school's academic work.

### **6.1.3 VISIONARY LEADERSHIP**

Bass (1990: 214) argues that a visionary leader envisions:

...a desired future and show[s] followers how to get it. [These] ...are basic components of the inspirational process. They require not only technical competence but artistry and creativity. ...the capable inspiring leader can reduce matters to a few key issues before asking others to consider what is to be done.

I do not believe that the changes brought in at Rocklands would have been possible if the leader was not a visionary capable of motivating all stakeholders to perform at their best. She had a dream to change the farm school situation and she had to work very hard throughout to realise her objectives. Because she knew how to co-operate with people and how to convince them she had her work made easier by the co-operation she received. She had a good track record she established as she struggled to build the farm school from the humble beginnings to a beautiful farm school structure and an academically successful school.

The principal had to sell her ideas to the Department of Education officials and had a number of serious difficulties because at times she did not see eye to eye with the officials on issues but technical competence, artistry and creativity finally won her the admiration of these officials. The principal had to seek understanding with the farm manager, a critical ingredient in the farm school scenario. The principal realised that some of her dreams would lie in ruins if she did not win the support of the farm manager. This shows foresight and willingness to venture into unknown territory. Her determination to succeed has been reciprocated by the teachers' willingness to support the principal and this in turn has resulted in teachers performing their duties at a higher level of commitment and with pride. The school has reaped the benefits of a visionary leader by the commitment of teachers to their work and the good performance by learners.

#### **6.1.4 CHARISMATIC AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS**

Conger and Kanungo as cited in Sergiovanni (2001: 141) point out that charismatic leaders share some common elements with transformational leaders in that both are able to help others reach their highest levels of need fulfilment. I have already alluded to this capacity as I was dealing with the visionary leader. I have found that the success of

Rocklands farm school could be attributed to the charismatic and transformational qualities the principal possessed. She has acted as a change agent for the betterment of the school. She has done this through personal sacrifices and painful encounters. She has spent more time at school and outside the school concentrating on school business to the detriment of her own personal affairs.

The principal has sacrificed her time and money as I have pointed out. She has paid workers of the school out of her own money because she is driven by the desire to see transformation in the farming environment. This has resulted in more and more people taking notice of what the principal was doing and the sacrifices she was making for the general good of the farming community. Teachers, parents and learners have begun to give the principal a huge amount of support for her efforts and this has elevated the principal into a special kind of a person who cannot be easily emulated. The principal sacrificed her health, in that she would ignore her doctor's advice and go to school or get involved in school activities despite her ill health.

I have referred to her track record and how she struggled to manage changes both in socio-political fields as well as in the educational sphere. All her activities have convinced the parents and teachers to work even harder to ensure that the farm school changes from its former dull image into a vibrant and energetic place. I have already shown that the principal's astuteness is demonstrated by her link with the farm manager. It has been shown that farm managers were not interested in what the Black learners were doing as long as they were being prepared to be of value to the farmer. The fact that this particular manager decided to be part of the transformation of the farming community demonstrates that he had vision and, as a result the school moved rapidly to attain good results and was deservedly accorded respect by the wider community.

It transpired that parents in particular regarded the principal, as a result of her actions, as a gift from the Almighty who has come to rescue their school from the quagmire of poverty and mediocrity into a shining example of a top achiever where dedication to service by the principal and the teachers is uppermost in their minds.

### **6.1.5 STRONG BELIEF IN HUMAN CAPACITY TO SUCCEED IN ADVERSITY**

The principal of Rocklands farm school has faced some serious environmental challenges. Many of these difficulties are normally associated with farm schools. These are poverty, lack of transport, scarce human and material resources. These difficulties are expected to impact negatively on a school's capacity to maintain a good schooling situation. They ultimately affect the learners' results.

The ability of people within the given environment to overcome many difficulties and to concentrate on the core business of teaching and learning is seen as the most critical issue by Velzen *et al.* as cited in Hayden and Thompson (2000: 8). He makes the point that:

...a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions in ...schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively...

is what people should be doing or aiming for to become successful. In other words teachers and parents rise above their poor conditions to create a better learning environment for their learners. The inspiration comes from the principal who is prepared to go the extra mile to achieve her objectives. I have already noted that the principal convinced teachers to work very hard and the teachers in response have supported her by co-operating with her and making sure that the centrality of education, *viz;* teaching and learning would be nurtured and supported by all. This is in line with what Christie (2001: 46) found in her studies that schools which have succeeded against all odds "...viewed teaching and learning as their primary purpose and the major focus of their attention."

Learners at Rocklands farm school have been motivated by both the principal and the teachers while parents provided the necessary support. This has allowed learners not only to develop respect for their teachers they have also become joint owners of the school's good effort and performance.

The principal tried to tackle the problems by reducing costs to parents. In the process she made them feel important in the education of their children; something unheard of before.

She had tried practical solutions to the transport problem. This did not mean that it was completely solved but her attempts alleviated to some extent the burden the parents and learners faced daily on the farm. The principal has insisted on getting fully qualified teachers thereby improving the image of the farm school which had been poor because of poorly qualified teachers. The principal has also used her influence to get support from the Department of Education officials to get learner support materials and other vital resources for the school. I have indicated how she used the services of the farm manager to get all the things she wanted for the school. The farm manager had declared his full support and this had allowed the principal to take risks knowing that she had the vital support of a farm manager. This is the triumph of the human spirit in adverse conditions. It is clear to me that this calls for a special kind of a leader. This is the kind of leadership Bass (1990: 11) finds illuminating and very important. He sees this leadership:

...as a matter of personality, as a matter of enduring compliance,  
as the exercise to influence particular behaviour, as a form of  
persuasion, as power relations, as an instrument to achieve goals...

This is the kind of leadership which has ensured success in the Rocklands farming community. It has drawn interest from other surrounding communities and has shown how the human spirit has triumphed over many obstacles. It has needed a special kind of a leader to turn the dismal farm situation into an attractive environment about which the Eastern Cape is proud.

Flowing from these important issues are recommendations that I think would be of particular interest to the Department of Education. I also believe that what I recommend here would provide good platform for further research.

### **6.1.6 LEADER WITH AUTOCRATIC TENDENCIES**

It is doubtful in my opinion if the progress at Rocklands Farm School would have reached the high performance level if the principal had not been “very strong” and “autocratic.” These are views expressed by some respondents. The resolve and

determination to have things done and the readiness to push teachers and learners alike towards the desired goals is viewed here as an autocratic action.

This study has shown that the principal faced serious environmental and personal challenges and that she decided to boldly confront these by issuing instructions and demanding results from both learners and teachers. Respondents have observed that the principal at time decide on her own to take certain actions without consulting anyone. For example, she went to the farm manager, discussed issues affecting the school and requested farm manager's support without consulting the staff. The benefits that have accrued as a result of her unilateral actions have benefited all and have been applauded and supported by many as good work

The principal though she seemed to have acted autocratically, she has shown democratic tendencies by reporting progress of her encounter with the farm manager and allowed others to participate. Bass (1990: 415) notes that "...the same person who display(s) one kind of authoritarian behaviour ... (is) likely to be seen as displaying work facilitation and persuasion..." as a democratic leader.

It is interesting in this study that autocratic tendencies are not only identified by the respondents but are also accepted and at some point praised as the best way of dealing with leadership issues. Given the fact that farm schools have operated within an authoritarian system the retaining of some of these authoritarian practices within the democratic South Africa call for a closer look and further investigation. The success of this school has depended to some extent on the authoritarian behaviour of the principal.

## **6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

This was a small-scale study which focused its attention on the role of the principal in an academically successful farm school. Naturally if the study has broadened its scope to include perceptions of other members of the community a bigger and richer picture would have emerged. The roles of other role players in the success of the school may also emerge and be highlighted, for clearly the school's success is attributable to more

than merely the principal's role. Since the focus of this study has been the leadership of the principal, I felt justified in having restricted my research to the sample selected.

The study may suffer from the weakness that interpretive studies are inclined to exhibit, which is the subjective nature of interpretive case study research. One can only concede that keeping personal bias at bay is a challenging and difficult task, but I hope to have countered this tendency by constant reflection on my role as researcher. My use of triangulation – interviews of different kinds of stakeholders as well as observations- will hopefully have gone a long way towards validating my findings, as well as enriching my study.

Naturally case study research cannot claim generalisability, but one can at least claim that readers may recognize what they find here, and see applicability beyond this case. For this to happen, a study needs to be rich and convincing: I hope it is both of these.

## **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.3.1 STRONG AND COMPETENT LEADERS**

This study has shown that strong and competent leadership are attributes needed for ensuring that a school succeeds. It is important for the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape to give this kind of leadership special attention as it determines to a great extent a school's good performance. Leaders sent to farm schools should be dynamic and eager to change the situation for the better rather than being concerned with keeping within the *status quo*. This is what the farm communities need and also what the present Government expects of such leaders because eradication of poverty, the upliftment of communities and the empowerment of people forms the fundamentals of the present Government's drive to improve people's lives.

Farm schools are areas of need and they would do well if they have energetic and visionary leaders who are prepared to go the extra mile for the benefit of the whole farming community. The Government through its various state agencies needs to pool its

resources to help improve the farm school situation. These schools are in need of good and reliable transport, good quality teaching materials, good classrooms for a good learning environment. The Government is bound by law to provide these services to all schools including farm schools. It would be worthwhile if the attention is mostly diverted to farm schools in order to assist competent and strong leadership for better results.

### **6.3.2 LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

I believe that not all leaders would know how to handle farm school problems and succeed. It would be in the interest of Education Department if regular training courses are held to empower leaders and to allow those who are already part of farm school leadership to share their knowledge and experiences with others. I believe that this would enhance the preparedness of principals to be able to deal with farm school challenges adequately.

The triumph at Rocklands did not come through any special training. It occurred because the principal's personality, outlook and vision urged her on to do all that she has done. I do not suggest that leadership training would produce such people but I believe that the sharing of ideas and experiences would go a long way towards raising awareness and understanding of farm school problems. It would also be enriching to leaders to learn how to approach different farm school situations.

### **6.3.3 FOCUS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH REGULAR STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

One of the main businesses of education is teaching and learning and when schools make this their core business they could prevent many problems that negatively affect school education. Christie (2001: 46) stresses the importance of teaching and learning because it is something she found to be central in her studies of resilient schools. She makes the point:

A striking feature in almost all of the schools in the study was

that they viewed teaching and learning as their primary purpose and the major focus of their attention.

What Christie says here seems to gain support from Hayden and Thompson (2000: 4) who argue that for a school to be regarded as effective there has to be purposeful teaching. They point out that an effective school:

...makes very clear that the quality of teaching lies at the heart of the issue. Not only do effective schools ensure that the quality of teachers is given high priority, but they also lay stress upon the quality of teaching.

There has to be a concerted effort by all involved to ensure that teachers teach and that pupils on the other hand learn. Rocklands has shown that despite all other needs having not been adequately fulfilled, the centrality idea of teaching and learning has been applied by the farm school and has become the most critical aspect of its success.

The teachers and the principal of Rocklands Farm School have decided to work harder despite the environmental constraints. This is unlike many schools where demands are made for human and material resources before teaching and learning could be implemented. At times the failure of a school is attributed to poor environmental influences. Despite these problems the teachers and learners at Rocklands Farm School have embarked on teaching and learning. The results have been good for a number of years.

In order to achieve success teachers need to receive in-service training so that they can face the difficulties with confidence. Their ability to change the poor conditions at Rocklands Farm School would be further enhanced by these training activities which would be intended to empower teachers to face challenges in their environment with confidence and with a sense of purpose.

The Department of Education would do well if it harnessed the services of various state agencies so that they could support farm school education. Some of these agencies could help farm school reduce problems like transport, poverty, unemployment and adult illiteracy since all these problems impact negatively on the farm school children's

education. Such actions would alleviate the burden of the principal and allow her to concentrate on the core business of teaching and learning.

It would be very encouraging to have staff members that are being developed so that they can realise their full potential. I believe that this would serve as reinforcement drive for the betterment of the farm school situation

### **6.3.4 ENGENDERING A COLLEGIAL AND SUPPORTIVE CULTURE**

The leader's ability to encourage all parents of the farming community, teachers and learners to work together has shown to be the ideal recipe for school success. Firstly all the people affected should help in ensuring that the main business of teaching and learning is fully supported. Secondly there should be encouragement from the principal and the Department of Education officials to ensure that staff members take responsibility for what they do at school thereby promoting order and good discipline.

Thirdly the principal and the Departmental officials should promote a good sense of belonging in the farming community so that people's pride and dignity could be restored. The school's objectives, aims, plans, vision and other ethos building activities should be made explicit so that they can get support from across the farm population. I do not doubt that if the situation is made clear for the rest of farming community there would be overwhelming support from them such as the one I have witnessed at Rocklands.

I believe that if these issues are taken into account and implemented the schools' ascendancy to excellence can be expected. I have also noted that it is the integration of all the issues pointing to good leadership and management that produce effective schools.

### **6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- This study looked at the principal's role but did not discuss the role within the feminist critique or with gender issues in mind. It would be interesting to examine

the principal's role from the gender issues perspective as this might throw some light on the reasons for the Rocklands Farm School principal's actions.

- The role played by other stakeholders in the Rocklands Farm School could add some important information to the data and thus adding more content and enrichment for engaging in further research activity.
- The self-concept of all people involved in the Rocklands Farm School success could make an interesting study. This would probably reveal the people's attitudes, their perceptions and beliefs about education and about how they have made it possible for this farm schools to succeed.
- South Africa is regarded as a democratic country after the demise of the Apartheid rule in 1994. The democratic ethos is intended to permeate all levels of society. In Rocklands Farm School respondents have noted that part of the school's success could be attributed to some autocratic actions by the principal. I believe that it could be illuminating to examine the democratic and autocratic actions within the school system particularly within farm school environment to determine the extent to which they influence good performance

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