

RHODES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE
GRAHAMSTOWN EAST GRADE 12 LEARNERS TO ASPIRE TO HIGHER
EDUCATION – A CASE STUDY**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

This research is an investigation into the factors that influence the decisions of grade 12 learners from Grahamstown East disadvantaged communities to pursue higher education. Research on learner aspirations has largely focused on access to higher education and little or no attention has been paid to the enabling or limiting factors and what can be done to increase the numbers of learners from disadvantaged communities who enrol at higher education institutions. This study aims to fill that gap.

The research was a qualitative case study located in the interpretive paradigm. The data was gathered using questionnaires and focus group interviews for grade 12 learners. Individual interviews were conducted with the parents of the grade 12 research participants, educators and the school management team. Observation and documentary evidence from school documents were also used for data collection. The data were analysed using systematic patterning, were interpreted, and given meaning linking it to the literature surveyed.

The main findings indicate that a number of enabling factors that influence grade 12 learners to pursue higher education co-exist with limiting factors. Recommendations arising from the main findings are presented and the limitations of the research are identified. Areas for possible further research in strengthening learner support so as to increase the numbers of learners who qualify for higher education and to enable the learners from disadvantaged communities to realise their aspirations, are suggested.

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ACRONYMS USED IN THIS STUDY

BE 1	Business Economics 1
CASS	Continuous Assessment
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
DoE	Department of Education
EDO	Education Development Officer
GADRA	Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association
HE	Higher Education
HOD	Head of Department
MIP	Matric Intervention Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PE	Port Elizabeth
PE Tech	Port Elizabeth Technician
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UPE	University of Port Elizabeth.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted previously to any other university for degree purposes.

Zimasa Burns-Ncamashe

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

This study takes place towards the end of the first decade of South Africa's democratic dispensation between September 2002 and August 2003. Great strides have been taken by government to reconstruct a fragmented and deeply discriminatory education system in order to build a system that embodies the principles of democracy, equity, redress, transparency and participation (Department of Education 2001). Samoff (2001:25) argues that the South African government's concerns with regard to education have been expanded access, desegregation and the redress of inequality.

The education ministry reports that, while systemic changes have the potential to improve the quality of learning, transformed learning opportunities are still not accessible to the majority of poor people. According to the Ministry, "inequality is still writ large in the education system and too many families are on the receiving end of an unacceptably low standard of education delivery" (Status Report 1999). Furthermore, the Ministry acknowledges that in spite of excellent policies and laws for the 21st century, large parts of the education system are seriously dysfunctional, inequality exists, teacher morale is low, school governance and management need to be strengthened, quality and educational outcomes are poor (South Africa, Department of Education, 2001). This view is supported by Smit (2001:72) who argues that the post-apartheid government adopted a variety of policies to restructure and transform the legacy of apartheid in a context of multiple social disparities and a variety of educational contexts. However, policies such as, for example, Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005 have been ineffective due to lack of teacher support and development. This, according to Smit, has resulted in poor educational outcomes (Smit 2001:72).

During the apartheid era, the South African education system was characterised by racial discrimination and inequality in the provision of schooling. Schools were racially defined and black schools were under the administration of the Department of Education and Training (DET). Scott (1990:13) states that DET schools experienced “chronic shortages of material resources and qualified personnel”.

One of the areas of “shortage” has been the absence of school guidance and counselling. A study conducted at a university in the eastern half of the Eastern Cape with students from disadvantaged communities, reports that “all interviews indicated that they had not had any career guidance at school” (Mji 2002:175). Van der Walt, Grimbeek and Marais (2001:153) claim that the current situation with regard to guidance and counselling is still highly unsatisfactory in South African schools. They argue that financial constraints impede the introduction of an effective and efficient system of educational guidance and counselling. In this study, however, as will be shown later the issue with regard to guidance and counselling is not only about finance but also about attitudes held by educators and the SMT and their lack of vision with regard to its importance for the learners’ future lives.

In the post-apartheid era, it is evident that many secondary schools in South African townships are plagued by high dropout rates, teenage pregnancies, sexual promiscuity, low pass rates, crime, alcohol and drug abuse. Teachers face the reality that a significant number of learners from township schools will fail to perform according to their potential (Msutwana 2004:i).

1.2 The context of the study

The Eastern Cape province in South Africa, where research for this study was conducted, is known to be among the poorest of South Africa’s provinces. The youth are reported to be generally disadvantaged due to high levels of poverty and unemployment and a lack of basic facilities at home and at school. According to Moller (2001:3), these conditions result in feelings of inadequacy, alienation and frustration, with the youth describing themselves as frustrated, but ambitious and positive about the future. Campbell (1994:30) found similar sentiments among

working class township youth. His research participants saw education as the key to a “bright future” for themselves, their families and their community. The participants in his research cited examples of township individuals who, after completing their education, gained access to good jobs, money and an improved quality of life. In addition, the role models cited displayed high self-esteem. Although aware of obstacles that stood in the way of educational success for a township person from a poor family, Campbell’s research participants emphasized determination and persistence as essential for success in the future. This is demonstrated by the fact that apart from admiring successful township individuals who had opportunities for self-improvement after completing their education, at the time of Campbell’s study nearly 50% of the sample were “currently pursuing their studies” (Campbell 1994:35). Qualities such as “ambitious”, “positive”, “determination”, and “persistence”, identified by research subjects above, are essential for success in life generally and in higher education studies specifically.

Learners at Phaphamani Secondary School situated in a resettlement area in Grahamstown East, are the focus of this study. Phaphamani is one of the schools with a persistently low matric pass rate in the district and as a result it has been declared a Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) school. MIP is for those schools that are monitored and supported by the Department of Education in order to improve the 0% to 30% senior certificate examination pass rate (Lewis 2000:14). Despite the prevailing circumstances at the school and at home, some of the school’s matriculants do pursue higher education studies and succeed.

It is important to understand why some pursue higher education, while many others do not, considering their equally impoverished and deprived school and socio-economic backgrounds, as findings may be useful in structuring programmes and interventions to help increase the numbers of Grahamstown East students who qualify to enrol at universities and technikons. The school, therefore, was chosen because of its failure rate, its location and the fact that its matriculants are part of the population targeted for participation in higher education as cited earlier.

In providing access to education and training opportunities and in contributing towards improving the quality of life of the people of South Africa, the Department of

Education (DOE) proposed in 2001 to increase the participation rate of 20-24 year olds enrolled in higher education from 15% to 24% over the next ten to fifteen years (Department of Education 2001). However, critics like Jansen (2001:6) do not see the proposed increase in the participation rate becoming a reality in the future, due not only to a decline in the number of matriculation exemption passes, but due to an increase in child mortality rates as a result of HIV/Aids and a decrease in fertility rates.

1.3 The research problem and purpose of the study

Given Jansen's pessimism regarding the DOE targets for increased enrolment at higher education institutions, everything possible has to be done to provide the "bright future" aspired to by the youth (referred to in the studies by Moller (2001) and Campbell (1994) above) by ensuring that enough students from the available and motivated pool enter higher education. In other words, concerted efforts should be made by parents, schools and communities, in conjunction with the Department of Education, to support these youths in fulfilling their aspirations.

Firstly, this research aims to contribute to an understanding of the factors that influence the decisions of youth from disadvantaged communities to turn their aspirations for higher education studies into reality. Secondly, it aims to look at what the school can do (in the face of poverty, unemployment, crime, alcohol abuse, and drug dealing in the immediate environment where in the school is situated; and amid lack of commitment, discipline, drive and motivation among peers within the school; lack of guidance, information and support from parents; neglect from and ignorance in some educators; and above all perpetually poor grade 12 results) to support learners with such aspirations.

Given the under-resourced, deprived schooling and impoverished working class background of the Eastern Cape youth in general and the Phaphamani Secondary School grade 12 learners specifically, it is my assumption that the latter's decision to pursue higher education will be greatly influenced, not only by the socio-historical,

socio-political and socio-economic contexts in which they grow and learn, but also by their perceptions of the benefits of higher education and their vision for the future.

1.4 A brief history and profile of the school¹

Phaphamani High School, a co-educational school in Grahamstown East, was established in 1991 during the back-to-school campaign initiated by COSAS and other student formations, for South African township youth whose schooling was severely interrupted by the political uprisings of the mid-1980s. This resulted in the school commencing with an enrolment of just over 1500 learners in grades 8 and 9. The school's first matric class enrolled in 1994.

For the first four years, the school did not have premises, but operated from three different primary schools on a platoon system. This system enabled the school to run from 12h00 to 17h00. The platoon system on its own had inherent problems in terms of a shortfall in school time, lack of infrastructure, sharing facilities and resources, as well as logistics resulting from having to manage the school from scattered venues.

In 1995 the school moved to new premises in a resettlement area. The school consists of modern, double storey buildings which include an administration block, two laboratories, a library, a typing centre, a computer centre, a fully equipped home economics centre, store rooms, a gym and a tuck shop. In addition to these facilities, there is running water, electricity, a telephone, a fax machine and a photocopier. Although the school premises extend over a vast tract of land, there are no visible sports fields, except for a netball/volley ball field in the paved quadrangle between two blocks of classrooms.

Learners from this school come from the various parts of the township making up Grahamstown East, namely, Fingo Village, Old Cemetery, Tentyi, Joza and its fairly new extensions 4,5,6,7,8 and 9, squatter camps such as Hlalani, Vukani and

¹ The history of the school is not neither recorded nor published and therefore the brief history and profile given above is from my own observation and knowledge as an insider in the school as well as from casual conversations with the members of staff that had been at the school since its establishment.

Eluxolweni as well as nearby towns, surrounding farm areas, and various parts of the city of Grahamstown itself.

The twenty-eight teaching staff members are all qualified secondary school educators. Seven of the educators are not from Grahamstown, but some have spent well over ten years living and teaching in Grahamstown while others have spent over twenty years living and teaching in this city. Almost 50% of the staff upgraded their qualifications and acquired higher education qualifications through either distance education or part-time studies at the University of South Africa, University of Port Elizabeth or Rhodes University.

In the first few years, the total learner enrolment reached 1500, but decreased over the years to 462 in 2002 and enrolment was down to 376 in 2003. The educator-pupil ratio was 1:16 in 2002 and 1:13 in 2003. The school's first matric class in 1994 registered 171 learners with a pass rate of 36,75%. In 2002 and 2003, there were 78 and 44 grade 12 learners with a 39,75% and 42,5% pass rate respectively. For nine years in succession the school's matric (grade 12) pass rate had never reached the 50% mark or above. However, a few learners managed to enter institutions of higher learning and succeeded. Phaphamani High School's grade 12 pass rate from 1994 to 2003 is tabled below:

Table 1
Phaphamani High School: Grade 12 Pass Rate 1994 – 2003

Year	No of Learners	Pass %	Matric Exemptions
1994	171	36.75	4
1995	334	10.74	3
1996	217	7.4	1
1997	110	14.5	1
1998	76	36.5	0
1999	108	37.6	1
2000	110	16.8	1
2001	88	31.6	2
2002	78	39.58	2
2003	44	42.5	1

1.5 Research questions

Two essential questions informed this study. The first is: what factors drive grade 12 learners from this school to aspire to higher education, despite their deprived home and school environment and, above all, their school's perpetually poor performance in grade 12? A *deprived environment*, according to Msutwana (2004:1) is one that is generally impoverished and devoid of opportunity. Drawing from Booyse (1989) and Hillman (1996), Msutwana claims that an impoverished environment is characterised by unstable interpersonal relationships; inadequate cognitive development; and is located in a poor residential area characterised by conditions such as overcrowded housing, noise, crime and other socio-pathological phenomena (Booyse 1989:143; Hillman 1996:3-4). Deprivation, Msutwana adds, is caused by various factors, inter alia poverty, cultural and geographical isolation, broken or incomplete families, physical deficiencies (e.g. hunger), urbanisation and inhibited socialisation.

Van Greunen (1993:106-107), cited in Msutwana (2004:2) argues that the environmentally deprived child displays, among other problems, a poor self-concept, language deficiencies, an obscured or darkened future perspective, confusion about moral and cultural norms and rejection of authority (he or she is often alienated from his or her parents). Taking the description of a deprived child further, Msutwana (ibid) cites Pretorious (1998:308-310) who claims that the deprived child's impoverished environment and problematic school situation further lead to an ineffective learning style, deficiencies with regard to home background experiences, as well as shortcomings in the social-emotional, cognitive, physical and educational spheres of development.

The second research question is: what can the school do to support learners who aspire to higher educational qualifications, to make their vision a reality, and also to increase the number of learners who qualify to enter higher educational institutions? Pretorious (1998:311) claims that children growing up in an environment characterised by a low socio-economic status, low level of education and limited potential for upward or vertical social mobility are caught up in a spiral of poverty, deprivation and cultural 'black holes'. This is said to impede not only their

motivation and optimal self-actualisation, but also any improvement in their chances in life and the achievement of a satisfactory quality of life (cited in Msutwana 2004:1-2).

According to Louw, Edwards and Orr (2001:72), success tends to encourage students to raise their level of aspiration, whereas failure generally causes them to lower it and so there is a reason for providing opportunities for success for every learner in the classroom. This point, they claim, is further emphasized by Glasser (1969) who argues that if people are to have a chance to succeed in life in general, they must first experience success in one domain of their lives.

Having described the deprived child, I would like to argue that, despite what has been said about this sort of a child above, the deprived child, still has aspirations that need to be realised. For their aspirations to be realised, I believe, the deprived children need optimal support.

1.6 Aspirations and poverty

In concluding my argument for this enquiry I include Appadurai (2001)'s notion of the capacity to aspire.

Appadurai (2001:1) in his paper entitled, *The capacity to aspire: culture and the terms of recognition*, argues that ideas of the future, like those about the past, are embedded and nurtured in culture. Culture includes beliefs, knowledge, customs, language, attitudes and behaviour. Thus, in strengthening the capacity to aspire, the poor should have access to resources that are required to alter the conditions of the poverty.

Appadurai (2001:4) sees poverty as material deprivation and desperation; lack of security and dignity; exposure to risk and high costs for thin comforts; and as materialised inequality, which diminishes its victims. It is the situation of many people in the world.

Appadurai (2001:5) sees the poor as “not just the human bearers of the condition of poverty”, but as “a social group, partly defined by official measures, but also conscious of themselves as a group”. While there may not be anything called a “culture of poverty”, the poor certainly have understandings of themselves and the world that have cultural dimensions and expressions. These may not be easy to identify, Appadurai notes, as they are not neatly fitted with shared prominent national or regional cultures and may be differently articulated by men and women, the poorest and the merely poor, the employed and the unemployed, the disabled and the able-bodied, the politically conscious and the less mobilized. In short, it is not difficult to identify threads and themes in the world-views of the poor.

According to Appadurai, aspirations have something to do with wants, preferences, choices and calculations. They form part of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas that derive from larger cultural norms. Aspirations about a good life are part of a system of ideas that locates them in a larger map of local ideas and beliefs. Aspirations to a good life can focus on marriage, work, leisure, convenience, respectability, friendship, health and virtue (Appadurai 2001:7).

The poor, like any other group in society, also express their aspirations. The capacity to aspire, Appadurai maintains, is not evenly distributed in any society. The rich and the powerful invariably have a more fully developed capacity to aspire. In other words, the better off one is in terms of power, dignity and material resources, the more likely one is to be conscious of the links between the more and less immediate objects of aspiration.

By and large, the better off are generally known to have a more complex experience of the relationship between a wide range of ends and means, because they have a bigger stock of available experiences of the relationship between aspirations and outcomes. They have many opportunities to link material goods and immediate opportunities to more general and generic possibilities and options. In contrast to the poor, they express their aspirations in concrete individual wishes and wants (Appadurai: *ibid*). This idea is related to Bourdieu’s(1977a) concept of cultural capital, which is discussed at length under critical theory in Chapter 2.

The capacity to aspire is thus a “navigational” capacity (in Appadurai’s terms). The more privileged in any society use the map of its norms to explore the future more frequently, more realistically and share this knowledge with one another more routinely than their poorer and weaker counterparts. The poorer members, because of their lack of opportunities to practise the use of this navigational capacity, have “a more brittle horizon of aspirations” (Appadurai 2001:7-8). This is similar to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, which is discussed under critical theory in the next chapter.

Having introduced the idea of the capacity to aspire, its uneven distribution in society, and its navigational nature, Appadurai concludes that poverty diminishes the capacity to aspire because, if the map of aspirations consists of a dense combination of “nodes and pathways”, relative poverty means a smaller number of aspirational nodes and “a thinner, weaker sense of pathways from concrete wants to intermediate contexts to general norms and back again” (Appadurai 2001:8). Where these pathways exist for the poor, they are likely to be more rigid, less supple and less strategically valuable, not because of any cognitive deficit on the part of the poor, but because the capacity to aspire, like any cultural capacity, thrives and survives on practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture and refutation. Where the opportunities for such conjecture and refutation with regard to the future are limited, the capacity will remain less developed (Appadurai 2001:8). It is for this reason that Appadurai suggests that the capacity to aspire requires strengthening among poor communities. He identifies a need to strengthen the capacity of the poor to exercise “voice”, to debate, contest and oppose as they wish, vital directions for collective social life.

Further, a stronger reason for strengthening the capacity for voice among the poor is because it is the only way in which the poor might find locally plausible ways to alter their terms of recognition in any particular cultural regime. Voice, in a way, is a cultural capacity and therefore it must be expressed in terms of actions and performances which have local cultural force. For voice to be effective, it must engage social, political and economic issues as determined by ideologies, doctrines and norms that are shared by and credible to, the rich and the powerful (Appadurai 2001:6). In other words, as the poor seek to strengthen their voices in a cultural capacity, they need to find those “levers of metaphor, rhetoric, organisation and public

performance” that will work best in their cultural worlds. In short, they need to work within structures that already exist and are meaningful in their social world. In essence, what Appadurai claims is that there is no short-cut to empowerment. It has to take some local cultural form to “have resonance, mobilize adherents and capture the public space for debate”.

The essence of Appadurai’s notion of the *capacity to aspire* and the need for it to be strengthened among the poor for them to alter their circumstances through their “voice” is in some ways related to and partly captured in the theoretical frameworks on which this research draws.

1.7 Theoretical framework for the research

This research draws on three broad theories, namely, critical theory, socio-cultural theory and selected social indicators from quality-of-life studies. These will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

1.8 Research methodology

This is a qualitative case study research located in the interpretive paradigm. The study has the following research goals.

Research goals

- a) To document the profile of the learner research participants and to ascertain the participants’ past and present life experiences that impact on their vision for the future; and whether these experiences and vision for the future are communicated to parents and educators;
- b) To establish the dynamic interplay between the school environment, the environment of the community that it serves and their impact on the educational aspirations of the research participants;
- c) To ascertain how grade 12 subject and class educators and parents contribute in preparing learners for higher education;

- d) To find out what grade 12 learners at Phaphamani Secondary School, in Grahamstown East, understand by higher education and what they perceive to be its benefits.

1.9 The structure of the thesis

In chapter 2, I present the theoretical terrain of the research, which is drawn from three broad theories, namely, critical theory, sociocultural theory and quality-of-life theories. Although the main thrust of the study is based on the principles of critical theory, some aspects of the sociocultural theory, such as the dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment that shapes the individual's thinking, and some aspects of quality-of-life studies like the level of well-being, youth development and empowerment are utilised to inform the study.

In chapter 3, I focus on the research process. A brief overview of the study which is a qualitative case study framed in the interpretive paradigm; the research goals, data collection techniques; research ethics and data analysis are discussed.

In chapter 4, I present the data from the learners, the parents, the educators, the school management team and school documents. I discuss and interpret that data in relation to theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2. From this discussion it became clear that research participants aspired to higher education in search of economic independence, social mobility, and personal empowerment and to fulfil obligations towards family. Factors that influenced grade 12 learners to aspire to higher education co-existed with equally limiting factors in the same environment.

In chapter 5, I summarise the main findings, make recommendations for improvements, present limitations of the research and suggest areas for possible further research that can help support the learners in realising their future aspirations.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1. Introduction

This research is an investigation into factors that influence the aspirations of grade 12 learners from a Grahamstown East secondary school to attend higher education.

The research participants in this study are grade 12 learners who come from a specific and common socio-historical and socio-economic background that evolved from a history of racial discrimination, and is characterised by poverty, unemployment and inequality in the provision of schooling. Their typical working class South African township background is reflected in both their family and educational lives and impacts on their self-concept and how they envision their futures. By and large, school-going youth are concerned about their futures for the purpose of self-actualisation and to the benefit of family and community. The relationships, the practices and development opportunities that stem from the learners' interactions with their parents, their teachers and their peers with regard to their future will be investigated. This research draws on three broad theories, namely, Critical Theory, Socio-cultural Theory and selected social indicators from Quality-of-Life Studies.

2.2 What is Critical Theory?

According to critical theorists such as Bourdieu, (1977); Touraine, (1977); Robbins, (1991); Calhoun et al. (1993) and Torres (1999), theory and practice are indivisible. There is always theory underlying and embedded in practice. Gibson (1986:1-6) states that critical theory attempts to explain the origins of everyday practices and problems and claims to offer guidance as to what should be done in practice. Critical theory engages directly with real problems, seeking not only to explain those problems, but also to provide the means to resolve them by enabling people to gain more control over their lives. It attempts to facilitate change towards better

relationships and towards a more just and rational society. It claims that individuals and groups should be able to determine their own destinies. The emancipatory aim of critical theory is its fundamental characteristic. It questions taken-for-granted assumptions and familiar beliefs and challenges many conventional practices, ideas and ideals. Torres (in Morrow & Brown 1994:91) argues that critical theory helps to deconstruct and analyse the premises of the principle of common sense, which guides the daily construction of social interactions.

2.2.1 Rejection of “naturalness”

Critical theory rejects the notion of “givenness” in social life. It refutes that anything in human society is “given” or “natural”, but argues that all “facts” are socially constructed, humanly determined and interpreted, and therefore subject to change through human means. In education, for instance, concepts such as “achievement”, “failure”, “progress”, “ability”, and “education”, are neither objective, natural nor impartial terms. They are concepts constructed by and that serve the interests of certain groups. In terms of critical theory, no social fact is value-free, language is always loaded and depends on where one is placed in the social world. According to Callewaert social relations cannot be defined as value-free entities (1999:133).

2.2.2 Enlightenment: the disclosure of true interests

Critical theorists assert that only through embracing critical theory can the realities of the social world be authentically disclosed and understood. They claim that critical theory provides enlightenment about conditions of social life. Enlightenment refers to the disclosure of the true interests of individuals and groups. “Interests” refer to the needs and concerns of particular groups, especially to the advantages and disadvantages that each group possesses in terms of “self-interests” or “vested interests”. This is illustrated by Kallaway when he notes that in South Africa, during the apartheid era, the education system had a true interest in promoting Afrikaner nationalist culture and tradition by emphasizing *volkseie* education. At the same time, Fundamental Pedagogics, as taught at colleges of education and universities at the

time, inculcated generations of Afrikaner, Coloured and African school teachers with religious and cultural beliefs aimed at creating docile citizens (Kallaway 2002:11). Privileged groups, therefore, always have an interest in maintaining the status quo to protect their advantages. This focus on interests indicates that critical theory sees conflict and tension as central features of social life. By uncovering the interests served by knowledge of social practices, critical theory endeavours to expose the roots of injustice and inequality. Critical theory in this study will be used to show the various relationships the research participants have with parents and educators and the practices they engage in, as influenced by the injustices and inequalities of the society into which they were born and the education system in which they learn.

2.2.3 Emancipation

The central intention of critical theory is that of emancipation, in other words, enabling people to gain the knowledge and power to be in control of their own lives, which is the purpose of education itself. Critical theory acknowledges the frustration and powerlessness that many feel as they perceive their personal destinies to be out of their own control and in the hands of others, unknown to them. Critical theory's endeavour is to bring to the fore those factors which prevent groups and individuals from taking control of or even influencing those decisions that crucially affect their lives, such as young people who feel unable to determine their own futures. In exploring the nature and limits of power, authority and freedom, critical theory claims to provide insight into how greater degrees of autonomy can be achieved. This prime emancipatory characteristic is critical theory's true distinctiveness. Critical theory does not only claim to provide enlightenment, or deeper awareness of one's true interests. In addition to that, its advocates claim, it can set one free. McLaren and Giarelli (1995:81), sum this up when they argue that, as students from cultures shaped by repressive forces of race, class, and gender begin to understand the power of the discourses that have moulded them, appreciate the causes of powerlessness and take such insights to form the basis of collective and individual actions to change repressive conditions, they are empowering themselves in the critical sense of the term.

At this point it seems appropriate to look specifically at critical theory in education. Lankshear (in McLaren & Giarelli 1995:301) asserts that if educational research is to have emancipatory force it has to contribute to the empowerment of stakeholders whose emancipatory interest is compromised under existing educational arrangements.

2.3 Critical Theory and Education

Although critical theory has its limitations in terms of being vague in giving specific remedies to heal social ills, it certainly has its value in education. Gibson (1986:6) notes that emancipation, which is the fundamental aim of critical theory, is a key word in education. The slogan of the 1980s, “liberation before education”, affirmed the ideological value of education in the eyes of township youngsters, as well as the sacrifice of the youth, who forfeited opportunities for personal advancement to promote the interests of the wider community (Mogano 1993).

The present post-apartheid curriculum framework in South Africa Curriculum 2005, discards many of the ideological restrictions of the past in an attempt to bring about emancipation (Kraak 2002:89). Firstly, in the process of curriculum restructuring explicit ideological contestation around race and the free market has been eliminated. New values, which are based on universally accepted practices in education, founded on principles such as non-racialism, non-sexism, democracy, participatory citizenship, equity and tolerance of cultural diversity, underpin the curriculum. Secondly, there is a strong commitment by government to the idea that a broad general education must underpin the integrated curriculum and its associated core of specialist and elective modules. Finally, there is recognition of the importance of balancing state and market forms of regulation in education and training. Key ANC government policy documents stress the need for curricula to reflect the obligations of the state towards the development of an empowered and equal citizenship, while also recognising the need for curricula to be responsive to market forces in the economy and job market (Kraak 2002:89). Findings of a quality-of-life studies research suggest that education

is considered to be a means-to-an-end for young people in that it provides a passport to jobs and facilitates social mobility (Moller, Richards and Mthembu, 1991; Moller 1991a).

Critical theory, according to Gibson, addresses itself to questions, which are of vital concern to all teachers, and, indeed, to all those interested in education. These are questions such as: why do some children persistently fail in school? Why are some pupils so unmotivated and so difficult in the classroom? Why are schools organised as they are? Critical theory attempts to explain these questions, taking into account the basis of everyday, taken-for-granted practices and problems (Gibson 1986:2).

In this study the concepts of critical theory will be applied in order to investigate factors that influence research participants in this study to consider higher education as an option for post secondary education.

2.3.1 Levels of explaining the origins of everyday practices

Explanations of social events such as classroom events can be interpreted at three levels: the personal and interpersonal (Level I); the institutional (Level II) and the structural (Level III). Gibson (1986) claims that answers to the questions: “Why does Mary fail in school?” can be dealt with at Level I (“She’s thick”, “She doesn’t like Maths/Mr Smith”), and at level II (“She follows the wrong curriculum”, “She’s in 3D”.); and at Level III (“She’s black/working class”, “Schooling is about the reproduction of inequality”). Critical theory claims to offer explanations that link all three levels, but Gibson (1983:15) maintains that it operates mostly at Level III in so far as it is concerned with structural, material, ideological and historical factors. Kraak (in Kallaway 2002), however, warns against making simplistic links between school achievement and race. He notes that in South Africa the link between race and school achievement has been perceived by scholars to be the result of institutionalised racial discrimination in education and not because of some intrinsic cultural backwardness.

Researchers who use critical theory in educational research generally do the following: they map the inequalities and injustices of education; trace those

inequalities and injustices to their source, showing the educational processes and structures by which they are maintained; and propose remedies to those injustices (Gibson 1986). It is my intention in this research to examine and understand the factors that impact upon the decisions of the grade 12s to pursue higher education. These learners, have high aspirations despite their school experiences characterised by inequality, low teacher morale, inefficient governance and management in schools, poor educational outcomes and the generally low standard of educational delivery, in spite of the policies and laws aim to restructure and transform the legacy of apartheid in South Africa (South Africa 2001).

2.3.2 Inequalities in education

According to Gibson (1986:45) critical theorists such as Reid (1981) and Halsey and Karabel and Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) see the evident inequalities in education as injustices and malformations of educational practice. There is evidence to indicate that working class pupils or certain minority groups perform less well educationally than middle-class or mainstream groups. In South Africa, for instance, it is generally known that on average grade 12 results are usually poorer in African township and rural schools than in former model C schools particularly in subjects like science and mathematics. Working class pupils achieve less well than their middle-class counterparts on almost any measure of educational attainment. The examples of problem areas for working class pupils, as mentioned by Gibson, include: reading or mathematics attainment at seven years, staying on after the compulsory school-leaving age and access to higher education. Middle-class pupils “out-perform” those from working-class homes in almost all respects. The evidence shows such inequalities are strikingly consistent over time: the lower the social class, the lower the attainment (Gibson 1986). Moller (1994) argues that, as a general rule, high educational achievements have above-average educational aspirations, which are often related to social class.

The persistence of the difference in educational attainment between social classes is alluded to by Everatt (2001) when he states that, despite the enormous changes that have taken place since democracy arrived, South Africa remains a third world country marked by a predominantly unskilled workforce, inadequate service provision, limited

access to amenities, mushrooming informal settlements, a high unemployment rate and escalating levels of crime. This state of affairs impacts directly and heavily on the learners who are research participants in this study in particular and on the youth of South Africa in general.

In spite of the evident improvement in material conditions of life over time, Everatt (undated) argues that the lives of black youth in South Africa have been and continue to be dominated by poverty. In such circumstances, research has shown, education is a clearly identified path from poverty (Everatt undated). In fact, this research will investigate some of the reasons provided by research participants for considering higher education studies after grade 12.

Gibson (1986) claims that critical theorists have labelled the persistence of the patterning of the evidence highlighted above as “the failure of the liberal ideology”. The “liberal ideology” refers to that network of beliefs that holds that education is not only a good thing in itself, but that it will work positively for the eradication of inequalities in society. Critical theorists challenge this view and argue that the persistence of social class trends in education and society is an indication of the failure of liberal ideology. Critical theorists claim that education has neither succeeded equally well for all classes, nor has it removed underlying inequalities and injustices (McLaren & Giarelli 1995, Morrow & Brown 1994, Popkewitz & Fendler 1999).

2.4 How do inequalities come about and how are they maintained?

Another common characteristic of all critical theorists is their concern with how inequalities come about and how the education system maintains and re-inforces them. Their endeavour is to get away from an approach that blames the victim, and to locate the causes of inequality elsewhere than in those who fail, underachieve, or are “at the bottom of the heap” (Gibson 1986). The root causes are believed to be matters of social structure and processes rather than individual psychology or genetic inheritance (Gibson 1986). Critical theories applied to education become theories of reproduction, in other words, theories that explain how social inequality is reproduced

from generation to generation and how education contributes to that process (McLaren & Giarelli 1995, Gibson 1986).

From critical theories of reproduction, four major themes by means of which critical theorists have attempted to explain the reproduction of inequality are discerned. The themes are: the economic relations, state power, culture and resistance. In the next section, each of these themes will be discussed further.

2.4.1 Reproduction of economic relations in education

Bowles and Gintis' (1976:131) correspondence theory is a well-known application of critical theory to education. It states that "the educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system, through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production".

Bowles and Gintis' (1976) answer to question such as: "Why do children fail?" and "Why do schools fail to eradicate inequality?" is that the economic structure of society demands and ensures those outcomes. They see the economic system as unequal and unfair in terms of power, wealth, opportunity and so on. Schools, they argue, emulate the economic system, are subordinate to it, determined by it, and therefore function to reproduce it. They claim that the social relations of schools prepare and accustom pupils to the discipline of work, particularly factory work. Schooling develops the types of personal conduct, self-presentation, self-image and social class identifications that are vital for job competency. This is even more evident in the OBE "philosophy", which is the present post-apartheid curriculum framework that is designed to respond to market forces in the economy and job market (Kraak 2002:89). I think that as much as these personal attributes (self-presentation, self-image, social class identifications) are essential, they should not necessarily relegate people to lower levels of the job market that will make it impossible for them to move up the economic ladder.

Bowles and Gintis' claim that the social relations of school prepare and accustom learners for the discipline of work is twofold. Firstly, they argue that schooling reflects characteristics of factory work. Like factory processes, the learning process is technically and socially fragmented and minimal regard is paid to pupils' interests.

Emphasis is on punctuality, attendance, conformity and good conduct. In other words, they claim that schooling, through its hidden curriculum, serves capitalist society by producing workers who are subordinate, docile, punctual and conforming. Furthermore, they argue that workers' alienation from work is a simple reflection of the alienation they have experienced at school. Secondly, because of this mirroring or correspondence between schooling and factory work, schooling automatically supplies the required labour force endowed with suitable personalities and attitudes to the economy. They maintain that the social relations of school correspond with the hierarchical division of labour at work; that pupils, like workers, are not in control of their education (work); that schools monopolise learning through certificates and pupils are motivated by extrinsic rewards of marks and grades, instead of satisfaction with the task itself. An equivalent of this factor in the South African public education system is the newly introduced continuous assessment (CASS) system, where the emphasis is on the number of written exercises rather than on the quality of work produced by learners.

The "production process" of the school deprives pupils of control over their lives in the same way that the production process of a factory does in terms of the workers. Borrowing the "principle of correspondence" for use in this study, I should be able to determine what research participants need to realise their aspirations and whether what they need is, in fact, within their own control, considering the complexity of relationships within and outside school. These relationships are with their parents and their peers; with their educators and the wider community.

2.4.2 Reproduction of the state power and education

Gibson (1986) states that in all developed countries, schools are provided by the state. Schools are consciously set up and funded in the belief that they will support and maintain state aims and beliefs. The school is the means by which the power and ideology of the state is reproduced, by providing appropriately socialised workers for the economic and political structure. Through rituals, dress, festivals and organisation, the intention to reproduce the state becomes evident and overt. The school curriculum, examinations and compulsory schooling are state manipulated entities.

Harris (1979) has a similar view in that like most critical theorists, he argues that the outcome of state intervention in education is essentially the reproduction of the unequal relationships of capitalism. His central concern is state domination of education. His basic thesis is that education in a capitalist liberal democracy “promotes a distorted and illusory view of reality in the name of enquiry into truth ... a structured misrepresentation of reality; a misrepresentation that educands become bearers of” (Harris 1979:164). In essence, what this means is that education is essentially concerned with the transmission of knowledge. Education is controlled by the ruling class, and to protect their interests, and maintain the status quo, the ruling class ensures that knowledge transmitted is a necessary distortion of reality to ensure that most people (notably, the working class) do not see things as they really are. The workers, through schooling are instilled with the belief that “the status quo is not working against their best interests but is serving them” (Harris 1979:164).

Like Bowles & Gintis (1976), Harris (1979) argues that education in a capitalist liberal democracy produces a particular consciousness “in complete harmony” with that “determined and required by social existence”. This ensures acceptance of the unequal relationships of school, work and society. This harmony and acceptance is achieved because “ ... the conduct and process of education in a capitalist society corresponds neatly with the conduct and process of the workplace” (Harris 1979:144).

2.4.3 Cultural reproduction in education

Bourdieu (1977a) is concerned with education’s role in cultural reproduction. In a chapter, Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction (in Karabel & Halsey 1977), he argues that schools transmit certain forms of culture and, in a way, reproduce not only that culture, but also its social class structure. At school children learn that only certain forms of culture are important. Culture includes beliefs, knowledge, customs, language, attitudes and behaviour. Bourdieu states that middle-class pupils already have access to certain cultural codes, while working class pupils do not because of the differences in interests and of everyday social practices. In other words, schools favour those already favoured, and hence cultural inequality is reproduced. Even though schools claim to be fair and neutral transmitters of culture, they, in fact,

actively maintain inequality, whilst claiming to provide equal opportunity (Bourdieu 1977a, 1977b). Theories of education and cultural reproduction demonstrate how education, through its language, values, processes, knowledge and so on, ensures the reproduction of cultural, hence economic inequality (Gibson 1986:56-57).

In exploring the relationship between education, culture and domination, Bourdieu uses the notions of symbolic violence, cultural capital and habitus, which are discussed below.

2.4.3.1 Symbolic violence

Bourdieu's (1977) notion of symbolic violence refers to the subtle process by which subordinate classes, the working class or pupils accept as natural or common sense ideas and practices that are actually against their own best interests (Gibson 1986:55). That subtle process is culture. For Bourdieu, it represents how symbolic power is wielded by schools to ensure that inequalities are seen as necessary and inevitable rather than as man-made and changeable. Bourdieu argues that schooling essentially functions to legitimise and re-inforce the disadvantages of learners. Symbolic violence, therefore, refers to the malformations the school culture brings about in individuals' perceptions and beliefs. Working class children find their home culture devalued and disconfirmed, while the dominant culture presents itself as natural. Symbolic violence results in symbolic wounds personally experienced and socially evidenced. This notion of symbolic violence is particularly relevant in explaining the school experiences of the learners in my study.

2.4.3.2 Cultural capital

Bourdieu (1977) claims that everyone possesses cultural capital (Gibson 1986:55). Cultural capital includes language, meanings, thought and behavioural styles, values and dispositions. He argues that education favours a certain kind of cultural capital, which in the process of education, is confirmed, legitimised and reproduced. Students lacking that cultural capital (because they had not acquired it from their families) find their own culture devalued or denied. They are disadvantaged because their speech, thought, attitudes and behaviour are not in accord with the dominant culture. Their

everyday knowledge, linguistic style, even dress and posture become marginal and inferior in relation to school knowledge, language and dress. Other students, particularly from the middle class, are more richly endowed with cultural capital. Such endowment enables them to accumulate greater cultural capital through education because they already possess the means to acquire more.

The school curriculum most evidently represents valued cultural capital with its high emphasis on abstract thought and literariness. Cultural processes are rewarded as natural rather than being seen as the privileged style of the dominant class. From examination gradings to the tones and refinement of speech, these processes are taken as the daily processes that symbolically, but powerfully, enable some pupils to add to their stock of cultural capital.

Research undertaken on township youth and their homework examined literacy events in the home (Caplan, Whitmore and Choy 1989, Caplan, Choy and Whitmore 1992; Moller 1994). Moller concludes that literacy events are critical factors for promoting a culture of learning in the home. According to Moller, literacy events include a positive attitude towards the tradition of knowledge in the form of myths, folk tales or reading aloud. Factors such as reading in the home tend to indicate social class, and although the research participants in my study come from an historically oral culture, which is discouraged by the schooling system, the practice of reading at home is worth exploring so as to determine how much cultural capital has been endowed upon my research participants by their parents in preparation for the higher education studies they aspire to.

Moller (1994) refers to research among US immigrants, which has shown that the tone of the literacy event can be more significant than the direct literacy effects. Among Southeast Asian immigrants to America it was insignificant whether children were read to in the medium of instruction or in their home language (Caplan, Whitmore and Choy 1989). Moller thus concludes that values relating to pride in one's cultural heritage, which are likely to be reinforced through mother tongue readings or storytelling in the home, are a positive home influence on academic achievement. In this case, the child's achievement is probably mediated through feelings of security about his or her background and this will have positive effects on

the children's self-confidence (Moller 1994). Reading, it is generally known, is foreign to African culture, and so cultural values have always been passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth through folklore. This practice, even nowadays, especially among disadvantaged communities, where there is a chronic lack of facilities such as reading material at home and at school, has not given way to reading as a regular practice.

2.4.3.3 Habitus

Habitus, according Bourdieu (1986:56), refers to a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions. The concept of habitus, he claims, is embodied culture. It represents “... a set of internalised competencies and structured needs, an internalised style of knowing and relating to the world that is grounded in the body itself” (Giroux 1983b: 269).

Habitus is individually held and felt. The concept of habitus is also the product of history, structure and socialisation. Habitus is culture internalised by the person as dispositions and values that guide behaviour. It enables the individual to make sense of his world and provides the impetus for action in that world. The habitus of the dominant groups differs from that of the subordinate groups: thus the habitus of the upper class differs from that of the working class, that of men differs from that of women, that of white differs from that of black, that of teacher differs from that of pupil. The habitus is a form of symbolic or cultural capital, which strongly reinforces any educational qualifications to distinguish an individual as “one of us”, suitable for elite membership. This, I think, is demonstrated in practices such as school re-unions, alumnus status and so on.

The habitus operates in a dialectic relationship with structure, so that a school produces both domination and learning. It is argued that working-class children are predisposed by their socialisation to enter manual occupations. They learn (intellectually, emotionally, sensorily, physically) through their very bodily experiences such as walking in single file, standing up straight, using a formal language code and demonstration of submission towards teachers. Learning becomes more than just a cognitive activity, it becomes deeply embedded in all aspects of an

individual's being: mind, feeling, body (Bourdieu 1977a:94). It has always been general practice for young children both at home and at school, in many societies, to show respect to parents and adults verbally, by using certain language codes, and physically, by using bodily gestures like kneeling, maintaining or not maintaining eye contact and so forth, depending on the culture or nation.

Contrary to critical theory's claim that working class children are predisposed by their socialization to enter manual occupations, there is documented evidence that with qualities such as determination, bravery and personal triumph in the face of poverty, race and gender discrimination one can rise above such a predisposition and overcome hardships, and deprivation through education, particularly higher education (Campbell 1994; Everatt & Jennings undated; Haines & Wood 1994; Manona 1994; Moller 2001). Drawing on critical theory's concepts of symbolic violence, cultural capital and habitus, factors impacting on the research participants' decisions to aspire to higher education will be elicited from the research participants in this study and will be examined in this thesis.

My view is that Bourdieu's cultural reproduction thesis has merit in that it draws attention to the subtle ways in which culture works in school to reproduce dominant forms of power relationships, however, it overlooks the actual day-to-day interactions of learners with educators, parents and peers within and outside the school which can motivate learners to achieve. It is now appropriate to look at how critical theorists analyse the encounters within schools and classrooms and what they identify as the central tenet of these encounters.

2.4.4 Theories of Resistance

Two common features of the three approaches discussed above are their abstract level of analysis and their neglect of what actually takes place in schools and classrooms. They are macro-approaches concerned with systems and overlook people-in-action. They treat schools as places that have inputs and outputs and perform certain social functions, namely reproductions of cultural and economic inequalities. What they ignore are concepts such as the daily life, the personal relationships, the lived

encounters of the classroom (Gibson 1986). Subsequently, there have been alternative approaches to counter that oversight.

These approaches have taken two forms. One seeks to report the realities of classroom life, particularly to identify the subcultures within it. The other seeks to employ or develop these classroom studies into a critical theory of education with resistance as its central concept. Such approaches contain vivid accounts of classroom interactions, pupil subcultures, and individuals making sense of the social world in which they find themselves. There are other studies such as those by Sharp and Green (1975), Willis (1977), Corrigan (1979), Humphries (1981), McRobbie and McCabe (1981), Spender (1982), Everhart (1983) and McPherson (1983) that consciously and directly seek to situate their detailed studies of school life in the class, race and gender structures of political and economic life. Such studies draw directly from critical theory to interpret their investigations.

Their writings reflect a concept of the reproduction of inequality as having four distinct features. Firstly, reproduction is never completely accomplished as it is opposed and resisted by some groups. Secondly, these groups draw upon their own culture as a resource to sustain their opposition. Thirdly, the act of opposition itself often contributes to the reproduction of inequality. In other words, through their resistance, the opposing groups contribute to their own 'failure'. Fourthly, within the oppositional groups' values, seeds of alternative or emancipatory education can be detected (Gibson 1986:59).

2.4.4.1 Resistance and reproduction of inequality

The work above is drawn upon to develop an encompassing critical theory of education with resistance as its central theme (Apple 1979, Giroux 1983a, 1983b). A brief account of Willis and Giroux exemplifies the notion of resistance. Willis's classic study (1977) of twelve working class '*lads*' is the best-known critical investigation of the oppositional culture of an English secondary school. The themes of his research are conflict, resistance and opposition. Willis's *lads* consciously, vigorously and vividly reject the official labels, meanings, curriculum and practices of the school. They condemn the conforming pupils and feel superior to them.

Willis has been able to show how these *lads* draw upon an ideology of resistance rooted in the factory-floor, and the male subculture of their families and friends who managed to survive through school. In a case such as the one described by Willis, the world is divided in a very distinct manner into ‘us’ and ‘them’ and not as the gradual ‘ladder of opportunity’ seen by the boys’ teachers. In direct contrast to school, the *lads* value the physical over the mental, male over female, white over coloured. Their world is described as one of toughness, luck, excitement, and challenge to authority and obedience, as well as a search for freedom, defined in their own terms. For them the logic of those values is embedded in their own and their families’ daily experiences at home, in the workplace and in the street. As Willis demonstrates, the *lads* opposition is itself produced and perpetrated by the structures in which they are entangled. Their challenges, their striving for ‘freedom’ and spontaneity and their macho, factory-floor ideology, serve to confirm their low social status. The *lads* are relegated, both by the system and by their own chosen actions, to the labouring life. Willis gives an account of social reproduction, which, while placing resistance as central, shows how that resistance actually ensures the reproduction of the *lads* working class status. Because the *lads* resent mental labour, they lose the possibility of emancipation through education. This clearly demonstrates that resistance without knowledge inadvertently strengthens the status quo, and renders the entire effort useless.

2.4.4.2 Resistance and emancipation

Another theory of resistance is that of Giroux (1983). Giroux challenges the three themes of reproduction discussed earlier, namely, economic, state and culture. He challenges any notion of all-encompassing structural or ideological causes of social reproduction. He points instead, to the fractured, inconsistent, contradictory patterns and effects of behaviour that result from human action. His emphasis is on ‘how human agency accommodates, mediates and resists the logic of capital and its dominating social practices’ (1983b: 282). Giroux uses the evidence of ethnographic classroom studies, combines the evidence with critical theory, and defines notions of culture, power, domination and reproduction, taking into account human action (1983b:282). His endeavour is to demonstrate how school and curriculum, whilst

serving the interests of dominant groups, also contain within them, the possibilities of emancipation, grounded in human agency.

The purpose of Giroux's (1983a) critical theory is the construction of a radical pedagogy. Radical pedagogy arises from a view of oppositional subcultures not simply reacting to their oppression, but actively and creatively constructing their resistance. In other words, from a clearer view of their own position, subordinate groups can generate knowledge of how they can improve their disadvantaged state of affairs. Giroux provides a critical theory that demonstrates how schools structure the experience of subordinate groups. The theory makes use of the concept of resistance and analyse oppositional behaviour, not as 'deviance or learned helplessness', but as arising from 'moral and political indignation'. Such resistance is inherently committed to the emancipatory interest. Above all, the resistance's allegiance is to 'an emancipation of sensibility, imagination and reason' (Gibson 1986:61). Giroux, accords to resistance the functions of 'revealing', 'critique of domination', 'opportunities for self-reflection and struggle', all in 'the interest of social and self-emancipation, (Gibson 1986:60-61). Such an undertaking by the subordinate group will make the group critically aware of its own interests: the raising of radical consciousness and a commitment to action. Giroux's view gives autonomy to individuals, classrooms, schools and the education system itself. While the racism, sexism and intolerance of Willis's *lads* is interpreted as an expression of the dominant ideology, and the malformations of capitalism, Giroux's (1983b) view of the solidarity and equality characteristic of working class groups represents the possibility of a more fraternal and egalitarian society (Gibson 1986:60-61).

Relating the above to the South African context, the black students' resistance of an abominable apartheid system's Bantu Education and Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in 1976, led thousands of learners to a peaceful protest march to the offices of the education authorities. This action was reciprocated with brutality that resulted in the deaths of many youths. However, that action led to the emancipation of the South African youth decades later. This study is taking place in a comparatively more stable political era and therefore the kind of resistance that exists within schools in a politically stable atmosphere, as was the case during the course of this research, will

be explained by employing Willis' and Giroux's notion of resistance, discussed above.

Theories of resistance are relevant in this research in terms of: identifying whether resistance exists in the school where the research participants learn; determining the extent of resistance, if it exists at all, and its impact on the learners; and whether the resistance triggers any plan of action for the future. In other words, does resistance, as in the case of Willis's *lads*, condemn the research participants in this study to the low socio-economic status of the impoverished community from which they come or does resistance influence them to rise above their present socio-economic status and give them the impetus to study further so as to improve their lot?

Although critical theory claims to link theory and practice, it is "long on analysis and short on prescription" (Gibson 1986). While on the one hand, it exposes "education's sickness", on the other, its suggestion of "remedies" is hard to come by. Critical theorists agree that action outside the school is the most effective way to bring change and remedy inequality. This study will determine whether the factors influencing grade 12 learners to aspire to higher education, are in fact, within or outside the school and whether, as principles of critical theory state, they have the potential to bring about change in the lives of the learners being studied. Because critical theory focuses on systems and overlooks the social and cultural contexts within which human interactions occur, I will now employ principles of socio-cultural theory to explain the social and the cultural aspects of the relationships that the critical theory falls short on.

2.5 Sociocultural Theory

Thorne, in Lantolf (2000:225) describes socio-cultural theory as:

... a term applied to the efforts by Vygotsky and his students to formulate 'a psychology grounded in Marxism' (Wertsch & Sammarco 1985:7) with an emphasis on locating the individual within collective, material and historical conditions.

Thorne adds that entailments of a socio-cultural approach foreground the social nature rather than to the individuality, language as socially constructed rather than internally

intrinsic, language as both referential and constructive of social reality and notions of distributed and assisted activity in contrast to individual accomplishment. Furthermore, Thorne argues, socio-cultural theory, as it is applied in psychology, education and second language acquisition focuses primarily on human development and learning (Lantolf 2000:225).

In a chapter published in the same volume (Lantolf 2000:83), Roebuck notes that sociocultural theory focuses on human individuals and, the possibility that an individual will act according to her own intentions. To back up this idea, she cites Van Langenhove this:

One of the big differences between physical entities and human beings is that the behaviour of people has a meaning for the people themselves and is mainly intentional (Van Langenhove 1995:23).

Roebuck asserts that according to Vygotskian thought, human beings are agents who act upon the world and engage in activity, constructing their environment in unique ways. According to this theory of activity (discussed later in the chapter), which is a component of socio-cultural theory, human behaviour is an intricate process, and the properties of any given activity are determined by the socio-cultural history of the participants (Leontev 1978). In essence, activity differs between and within individuals.

2.6 Central tenets of socio-cultural theory

Sullivan, in Lantolf (2000), claims that socio-cultural theory is founded upon understanding the importance of interaction between people for the formation of mental activities. She identifies two basic tenets of Vygotskian socio-cultural theory. The first is activity theory, which reflects the fundamental idea that motives for learning in a particular setting are intertwined with socially and institutionally defined beliefs. The second is mediation, which maintains that human mental activity is mediated by tools and signs, the primary tool being language (Lantolf 2000:115). Sullivan adds that broad socio-historical values are unconsciously embedded in the various ways people interact with each other (in Lantolf 2000:122).

2.6.1 Activity Theory

Lantolf, notes that, activities, whether in the workplace, classroom or other settings, do not always unfold smoothly. What begins as one activity can reshape itself into another activity in the course of its unfolding. As people participate in different culturally specified activities they enter into different social relations and come into contact with, and learn how to employ and ultimately appropriate different mediational means. In this research, the activities learners engage in will be examined in terms of how they construct their environment and their attitudes towards the school environment as well as their aspirations for further study.

2.6.1.1 Activity, Context and Practice

Thorne, in Lantolf (2000:236) argues that the foundation of sociocultural theoretical approaches is that even though context, language learning and use, and subjectivity are analytically separable, they need to be understood historically and interdependently to make sense of “situated activity” (Lave and Wenger 1991, Hanks 1996). Roebuck writes that according to Vygotskian thought, human beings are agents who act upon the world and engage in activity, constructing their environment in unique ways. Citing Coughlan and Duff’s (1994:175) definition, Roebuck adds that activity is the “behaviour that is actually produced when an individual (or group) performs a task. It is a process, as well as the outcome of the task examined in its socio-cultural context” (in Lantolf 2000:83).

Activity settings, according to John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith (1994:11), vary a lot both within and between cultures. The cultural context shapes the type and variety of social interactions. Context in some studies is perceived to begin with verbal exchanges and dialogues and goes beyond that to include the origin or source of exchange, such as how the participants in the exchange came to interact in the way they do. For instance, if a parent and child engage in reading a storybook, it is in the interest of a socio-cultural theorist to ask how this *activity* has come to be enacted, how this routine or practice expresses the values of the group and relates to other cultural practices, and what role this activity plays in general patterns of culture. In asking such questions, socio-cultural theorists are enquiring about the culturally and

historically situated values, tools and practices that are formative in that particular context of social interaction. The values in the case of this study will include concepts such as the relation between the learners and their parents in terms of imparting values and support; and the relationship between learners and the educators in terms of imparting academic skills, guidance and support. The tools and practices may include language and positive attitudes towards achieving one's goals in life.

Context is a central notion in studies of language socialization (Heath 1983, 1990; Ochs 1988) and apprenticeship (Lave 1988). A definition of context by McLane (1987:268) gives a broad description of the concept:

Contexts are constituted by what people are doing and where and when they are doing. As McDermott (1976) puts it succinctly, "people in interaction become environments for each other. Ultimately, social contexts consist of mutually shared and ratified definitions of situations *and* in the social actions persons take on the basis of these definitions".

John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith (1994) argue that the sociohistorical context provides enculturation into a particular community of practice. Rogoff (1990) refers to this as "mutuality" of individual and environment. A central claim made by socio-cultural theorists is that "the kinds of contexts that children spend their time in are the fundamental units out of which cognitive development is constructed" (Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition 1983:322 cited in John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith 1994:12). Because learning and development take place in meaningful, socially and culturally patterned contexts, they need to be studied and understood in those contexts. For instance as a means of interpersonal communication, language is basic to social and cultural practices (Bourdieu 1977, Lave 1988). Scribner and Cole (1981:236) defined "practice" as a "recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge".

According to Thorne (in Lantolf 2000:225), the sedimented patterns and activities engaged in, in everyday life are both a product of the constraints and resources that a particular social and institutional setting provides, as well as productive of these very settings, constraints and resources. Summarising this view, Hall claims that

[a] primary interest of [social practice theory] is the explication of the interactive processes by which individuals within groups within communities

(re)create and respond to both sociohistorical and locally situated interactive conditions, and the consequences – linguistic, social and cognitive – of their doing (Hall 1995:221).

In other words, social practice theory seeks to unify under a common theoretical umbrella the ways human activity reproduces systems and how systems may change as a result of human activity. Central to this approach is that human activity is mediated by material artefacts and by symbolic sign systems. The socio-cultural approaches to learning are based on the central concepts of mediation, historical and contextual situatedness, and human action. In this study, the socio-cultural approach will be used to look at how the socio-cultural environment of relations and mediational means use in the home and school context help to shape learners' aspirations.

The social context is fundamental to Vygotskian socio-cultural theory, which is based on the understanding of the importance of interaction between people for the formation of mental activities (Vygotsky 1978). Sullivan (in Lantolf 2000:115) describes social context as not only referring to the classroom setting and the ways students interact within it, but also to the historical and cultural context of the world outside the classroom. In a socio-cultural view, it is assumed that classroom practices are situated in particular cultural environments (Breen 1985b, Kramsch 1993, Brooks 1992, Holliday 1994) and that within these environments, definitions such as “good teaching” are socially constructed. Furthermore, from the critical theory perspective discussed earlier in this chapter, schooling is not a neutral process, but is tied to history, power and ideology (Fairclough 1989, Giroux and McLaren 1983a&b, Pennycook 1989). In the light of that, to assume that what works well in one educational setting will work well in another is to ignore the situatedness of history, culture and pedagogy (Lantolf 2000:115). In other words, from a socio-cultural perspective, one has to be mindful of the impact of cultural and sociohistorical influences on education. Although socio-cultural theory claims to take into consideration history and culture it seems to ignore the inequalities and resistance that exists within the social settings or cultural contexts that it identifies. It also overlooks the socio-political and socio-economic impact of these contexts on the people operating within them. To overcome that limitation I am framing my study partly within the critical perspective and partly within quality-of-life theories.

2.6.2 Mediation

The most fundamental concept of Vygotskian socio-cultural theory is that the development of the human mind is mediated. John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith (1994:139) assert that a central concept in an interactional understanding of human thinking is “mediation”. They cite Wertsch (1985:15) as acknowledging that “Vygotsky made his most important and unique contribution with the concept of mediation”. “Mediation” according to John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith (ibid) refers to the tools, signs, and practices that contribute to qualitative changes in development. The term is used in various ways, but their use of mediation refers to those means, which become tools for thought, those means and practices which, through social interaction, become internalised and later become available for independent activity (John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith: ibid).

Illustrating the same point, Lantolf (2000:1) uses Vygotsky’s argument that, just as humans do not act directly on the physical world, but rely, instead on tools and labour activity which allows humans to change the world and with it the circumstances under which they live in the world, humans also use symbolic tools or signs to mediate and regulate their relationships with others and with themselves and in that way to change the nature of these relationships. Tait (in Whalley 2001) articulates this when she writes:

we want our ... children to become ‘the manager of their own possibilities’ (Leavers 1995). This means that children as young as two are able to access materials with appropriate supervision and support, such as real saws and hammers and scissors when they need them.

Physical as well as symbolic or psychological tools are artefacts created by human cultures over time and are passed down to succeeding generations, which can modify these artefacts before passing them on to future generations. The symbolic tools include numbers, arithmetic systems, music, art and language.

Since humans inherit cultural artefacts from their ancestors, who had also inherited artefacts from their ancestors, Vygotsky reasoned that the only adequate approach to the study of higher mental abilities is historical (Lantolf 2000). As such he proposed four genetic domains for the study of higher mental functions, one of which, is the

socio-cultural domain. The socio-cultural domain, which is relevant to this study, is concerned with how the different types of symbolic tools developed by human cultures throughout their respective histories affected the kinds of mediation favoured, as well as the kinds of thinking valued by these cultures or communities. This would include the impact of such artefacts as numeracy and literacy. Heath (1980:126) alludes to this when he argues, “Literacy acquisition is often a function of society-specific tasks which are sometimes far removed from those of formal schooling, and are conceived of as resulting from efforts expended by ‘teachers’ and ‘learners’”. Furthermore, in support of this view, Gee (1990:61-62) asserts that “literacy has no efforts – indeed, no meaning – apart from particular cultural context in which, it is used, and it has different effects in different contexts”. This view is played down by those who think that people with “restricted literacy” have limited ability to solve problems and think powerfully (Ong 1982). In contrast, Gee argues that claims for the generalised benefits of literacy are ideological:

They are part of an “armoury of concepts, conventions and practices” that privilege one social formation as if it were natural or, at least, the end point of a normal developmental progression of cognitive skills (achieved only by some cultures, thanks either to their intelligence or to their technology) (Gee 1990:60 cited in John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith, 1994:23).

The above discussion illustrates that socio-cultural views of language and literacy have shifted focus from the individual learner, but see literacy events as culturally situated practices (Scribner and Cole 1981, Goodman and Goodman 1990). This is what Bourdieu’s (1977) cultural capital, referred to earlier in the chapter, is all about.

2.7 Quality-of-Life Studies

As indicated earlier in the chapter, self-development among the youth of school-going age is a concern. Self-development includes the development of ambitions, aspirations and career choices.

Youth development as a concept has been widely researched in quality-of-life studies. It has been given various definitions. Moller (2001:3) defines youth development as “young people’s personal development which will earn them fulfilment as a person and a place in society ... youth development refers to the institutionalisation of the

socialisation process whereby youth become adults who conform to contemporary norms and values in society". The National Youth Commission's definition of youth development is

a process whereby young men and women are able to improve their skills, talents and abilities to extend their intellectual, physical and emotional capabilities to express themselves and live full lives (in Moller 2001:3).

Moller argues that youth have ambitions in life that shape their chosen development paths and that they are part of a web of social circumstances and conditions, which will enhance or curtail their development potential. As such, this is quality-of-life's link to socio-cultural ideas of development.

Another concept, that is related to youth development is youth empowerment. The National Youth Commission refers to youth empowerment as "the process of increasing personal, interpersonal and political power to enable young women and men or groups of young people to improve their life situation" (Moller 2001:3). Empowerment, according to Moller, requires full participation of young men and women in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions impacting on the functioning and well-being of the society. Referring to South African youth, Everatt (undated) argues that defining youth and their needs unavoidably touches on the political terrain because of the high profile of youth in the liberation struggle and the ongoing political contest for their support.

The other important concept in quality-of-life theories, when dealing with the youth, other than self-development and empowerment is the concept of well-being. Sen (1993) argues that the well-being achievement of a person can be seen as an evaluation of the 'wellness' of the person's state of being. The concept of well-being is worth noting in this study. Laevers (1997) has shown interest in what goes on inside children while they are learning. Many factors can stop children from being able to learn. The way that Laevers describes the inability to learn is through each child's 'level of well-being' (Laevers 1997:15). He maintains that 'the level of well-being in children indicates how they are doing emotionally' (ibid). The degree of well-being shows how much the educational environment succeeds in helping the child to feel at home, to be her/himself and have her/his emotional needs (the need for attention, recognition, competence ...) fulfilled (Laevers 1994:5).

Laevers has identified ‘a number of characteristics in a child’s behaviour’ that may help assess each child’s well-being. Not all of these characteristics need to be present for a child to be at a high level of well-being, but when at least half of them are present it shows a high level of well-being. This is the list of the characteristics as identified by Laevers:

- Openness and receptivity
- Flexibility
- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- Being able to defend oneself and self-esteem
- Vitality
- Relaxation and inner peace
- Enjoyment without restraint
- Being in close contact with one’s inner self (Laevers 1997:19)

Although these characteristics were identified among young children, the learners who were research participants in this study have demonstrated some of these as an indication of the level of their well-being, which they believe will have a positive impact on their achievement of their life’s goals, in this case, realising their aspirations to higher education qualifications.

In the next chapter research methodology will be dealt with.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate the factors that influence the decisions of learners from disadvantaged, poorly performing school in an impoverished socio-economic environment to aspire to higher education. The research participants are grade 12 learners whose school has had poor grade 12 results for many years. This resulted in the school being declared an MIP school. MIP schools are part of a matric intervention programme set up by the Department of Education at district, provincial and national level to ensure academic progress. The intervention includes offering support and regular monitoring by the Department of Education (see section 3.2). Despite the prevailing circumstances at the school, some of its matriculants do pursue higher education and succeed. Learners' educational aspirations will be investigated in the context of the community within which they live and learn. In addition, the processes by which the aspirations are supported and sustained will be examined. I need to say that this is only an exploratory study and I do not claim to provide any definite answers to questions related to the case, but I believe that these research findings will make a contribution to the understanding of factors that influence the grade 12 learners to aspire to HE.

I would like to acknowledge that this inquiry, which took place over a period of eleven months between September 2002 and August 2003, was triggered by the concerns I had about the quality of the school's output for higher education, through my involvement with the school at two levels. I was a member of the School Management Team (SMT) Head of Department for School Guidance and Counselling. I also taught Life Orientation in grades 8 and 9. I was therefore an insider at the school and as a researcher I had my own biases, which I had to counteract throughout the research process. However, being an insider also afforded me intimate knowledge of the context within which the study took place. Gaining the emic or insider's perspective is central to qualitative research (Winegardern nd).

In the Eastern Cape, where research for this study was conducted, youth are reported to be generally disadvantaged due to high levels of poverty and unemployment and a lack of basic facilities at home and at school. In a study conducted by Moller (2001:3), these conditions were found to result in feelings of inadequacy, alienation and frustration. However the youth in her study described themselves as frustrated, but ambitious and positive about the future.

3.2 Goals of the research

To be able to achieve the aim of the research as spelt out above, I have broken the broader aim down into smaller goals as indicated below:

- a) To document the profile of the research participants and to ascertain the participants' past and present life experiences that impact on their vision for the future; and whether these experiences and vision for the future are communicated with parents, educators and/or peers;
- b) To establish the dynamic interplay between the school environment, the environment of the community that it serves and their impact on the educational aspirations of the research participants; and
- c) To ascertain how grade 12 subject and class educators and parents contribute in preparing learners for higher education.
- d) To find out what grade 12 learners at Phaphamani Secondary School, in Grahamstown East, understand by higher education and what they perceive to be its benefits;

Data collection plan

Data focus	Data collection plan
a) To document participant's profiles	• Questionnaires • Focus group interviews • Document analysis e.g. grade 12 learner attendance registers, subject portfolios, mark lists and mark schedules.

b) Participants' prevailing school and life experiences that impact on their vision for the future.	• Focus group interviews with the selected sample.
c) Ways in which parents, grade 12 educators support and contribute to preparing these learners for higher education.	• Interviews with parents of the participants. • Interviews with grade 12 class and subject educators. • Observation and field notes during grade 12 learner support programmes and/or activities. • Analysis of documents regarding learner support programmes and/or activities.
d) Phaphamani Secondary School's grade 12 learners' understanding of higher education and its perceived benefits.	• Questionnaires. • Focus groups with participating learners.

3.3 A qualitative research design

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative research can best be used when we want to know the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the target population. Qualitative research allows the research participants to speak for themselves and makes it easier to access the meanings that people have constructed (Taylor & Bogdan 1984, McMillan & Schumacher 1993).

In qualitative research, the researcher collects extensive narrative data, sometimes over an extended period of time, in a naturalistic setting (Gay & Airasian 1996:627). Another way of viewing qualitative research is that it is an approach that sets out to understand and interpret daily occurrences and social structures, as well as the meanings people give to phenomena (Cantrell 1993). Qualitative researchers study

things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

The product of qualitative research is richly descriptive, expressed in words and pictures rather than numbers. Descriptions of the context, the participants, the activities of interest, as well as the participants' own words, are typically included (Winegardner 2001:2). Furthermore, qualitative research focuses on the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the key instrument. The crucial factor is not the number of respondents, but rather the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam 1998:77). Working within a qualitative design enables the researcher to participate in the world of the individual so as to understand and make sense of learner aspirations as experienced by the Grahamstown East Grade 12 learners themselves (Cantrell 1993, Creswell 1994, Field 1995, Savin-Baden 2000, and Merriam et al. 2002).

Qualitative research assumes that features of the social environment are constructed as interpretations by individuals and that these interpretations tend to be transitory and situational. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) see qualitative research as multi-method in focus, involving the interpretation of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Winegardner nd)

3.4 An interpretive paradigm

This research is located in the interpretive paradigm. The aim of the research is to investigate factors that influence grade 12 learners in a Grahamstown East township and matric intervention programme school to pursue higher education. According to Cantrell (1993), interpretive researchers are keen to understand the meaning people make of daily occurrences and how they interpret them within the contextual social and natural setting. Similarly, Winegardner (nd) maintains that the cultural aim of

qualitative interpretive research is to gain the perspective of the participants in this study.

Interpretivists regard people as agents of creation of meaning in their settings and these meanings are valuable and useful for research (Janse van Rensburg 2001:16). People's interpretations and interactions with their situations create reality. Bassey (cited in Kirkegaard 2001) describes the interpretive paradigm as follows: "Interpretation is a search for deep perspectives on particular events and for theoretical insights. It may offer possibilities, but no certainties, as to the outcome of future events" (Kirkegaard 2001:27). I believe that the findings will not only be worthwhile to MIP schools in disadvantaged communities, but to other stakeholders in education such as parents, policy-makers in the Department of Education and, possibly, even the institutions of higher education.

Cantrell (1993:83) maintains that reality within the boundary of the perspective of interpretivism is "multiple and divergent". This means that reality is captured through different methods, such as observation and language interactions. Reality is also perceived differently by different people in the same social setting. Locality is based on social meanings and these meanings are not static.

The epistemological assumption in this paradigm is that events are understood through the "individual's mental process of interpretation, which is influenced by and interacts with social context" (Cantrell 1993:83). This means that the researcher has to engage in conversation with the affected area. This is the reason I conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with learners, parents, educators and the school management team. My interest was in contextual meaning-making, hence I look a close look at individuals and a small group in a "naturalistic setting, using an in-depth study to look for rich, detailed information of a qualitative nature through in-depth interviews, observations and analysis of documents (Janse van Rensburg 2001)

3.5 A case study

In conducting a qualitative inquiry, a case study is one of the methods that can accommodate a variety of research designs, data collection techniques, epistemological orientations and disciplinary perspectives. A case study focuses on holistic description and explanation and lends itself to the examination of a phenomenon in its natural state (Winegardner nd:1). While a case study has its limitations, its flexibility and versatility makes it suitable and appropriate for the purpose of this study because case studies are exploratory in nature and normally focus on current events – be it a particular situation, programme or phenomenon – and attempt to answer questions of how and why (Winegardner undated:1). Case studies deepen the understanding of the phenomenon or programme facilitating the discovery of new meaning, the broadening of experience or confirming what is already known (Winegardner undated).

Stake (1995:4) writes that “Case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case”. Contrary to this, Cohen and Manion (1994) regard the purpose of case studies as a way to come up with generalisations about the wider population to which the unit of the case study belongs. Stake argues differently, that the essence of case studies is particularisation not generalisation. He sees the aim as extensive knowledge of a particular case and not to discover how it differs from others. Stake also asserts that case studies in education focus on people and programmes, and on uniqueness and commonality. My case study will serve both purposes: firstly to gain extensive knowledge about Phaphamani High School grade 12 learners’ school experiences and aspirations and what is being done to achieve them; secondly, it is hoped that findings might assist learners and other stake holders in similar circumstances elsewhere.

3.6 Data collection techniques and sampling

Several research methods were employed in this study. They include questionnaires; interviews with key informants such as parents, educators, the school management team and the school principal; focus groups with grade 12 learners wanting to pursue

higher education; observation of learner support activities and programmes and analysis of school documents. Harding (1987) states that:

A research method is a technique for (or way of proceeding) gathering evidence. One could reasonably argue that all evidence-gathering techniques fall into one of the following three categories: listening to (or interrogating) informants, observing behaviour, or examining historical traces and records. In this sense, there are only three methods (Harding 1987:2 cited in Gough 2001).

3.6.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was circulated to those Phaphamani High School grade 12 learners wishing to pursue higher education studies in 2003 and 2004. The purpose of the questionnaire was to elicit specific information such as biographical data, information about home background, school life and community involvement, learners' aspirations for further study and their vision for the future. Given the small number (average 3) of matriculation passes that the school produces each year, as well as the marked decrease in the number of grade 12s (78 in 2002, 44 in 2003), I had presumed that less than ten learners would show an interest in pursuing higher education both in 2002 and in 2003. Those who came forward became the sample for this qualitative study. Questionnaires for the 2002 cohort were completed at the researcher's home for two reasons. The first was that it was possible to have everyone complete the questionnaire at the same time. Secondly, it was possible for respondents to ask for clarity as the questionnaires were written in English, which is not their mother tongue. For the 2003 cohort, questionnaires were completed at the learners' homes and were returned to the researcher on completion. The learners did not seem to have had problems with the language of the questionnaires. The questionnaire was open-ended in parts where information about school experiences and envisioning the future was sought, but it was closed-ended when it came to questions seeking information on biographical data, parents and their economic activities, household members and their activities, and higher education.

3.6.2 Focus group interviews

After administering questionnaires, learners who had completed the questionnaires also participated in focus group discussions. There was one focus group for each

year's squad. Focus group interviews were conducted in both English and Xhosa to allow for learners to express themselves with ease a language of their choice. The purpose was to follow up any common responses and themes by probing and clarifying. The common responses and themes ranged from prevailing life experiences, values, school life, future plans and how they would be realised. Group interviews also stimulated a lot of thinking and discussion among participants about issues of common concern affecting both their present and their future aspirations. Group discussions that explore a specific set of issues such as those mentioned above are referred to as focus groups. Focus groups are distinct from other group interviews and use group interaction to generate data: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view (Barbour & Kritzing 1999). Focus groups as qualitative data collection tools offer several advantages (Kruger & Casey 2000). These discussions allow the researchers the opportunity to gain in-depth insights into the world of the participants. Focus groups are collectivist, rather than individualistic data collection methods that bring multivocality of participants' perceptions and experiences to the research process (Madriz 2000:836) and therefore serve the purpose of this research. In addition, an environment conducive to self-disclosure has to be established (Krueger 1994). Informative focus groups where the learners were able to talk about their school life, perceptions of higher education, their needs in order to succeed, their vision for the future and what they are doing to achieve it, were vital to this study.

3.6.3 In-depth individual interviews

In addition to questionnaires and focus groups with the research participants, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following stakeholders: the school principal, the school management team and grade 12 educators. The interviews were conducted mainly in English, because they were prepared in English and, above all, the educators and the SMT had a good command of the language. It is worth mentioning that two of the SMT members were neither Xhosa nor English mother tongue speakers. The aim of the interviews was to ascertain their respective roles in preparing these learners for higher education. Further semi-structured interviews with the learners' parents and/or guardians were also conducted. Although the interviews were prepared in English, both Xhosa and English were used to conduct these

interviews to accommodate those parents who could not express themselves in English. One parent preferred to speak English throughout the interview. These in-depth, individual interviews, focused on how parents' values, educational background, occupation, community involvement and financial standing contribute to preparing their children for higher education in terms of financial and emotional needs. The principal's interview was an attempt to determine the school management team's perspective on preparing grade 12 learners for higher education and how the school implements that. Grade 12 subject educators were interviewed in order to find out how they impart relevant academic skills required for higher education studies in their various subjects. The purpose of interviewing according to Patton (2002), is to "allow us to enter into another person's perspective ... to find out what is in and on someone else's mind". According to Salend and Duhaney (2002:63), "although interviews can be time consuming to administer and analyse, they allow ... in-depth statements, descriptions, recommendations, and examples that can be particularly useful in understanding ... experiences ..." The data from the interviews with parents, educators and the school management team (which was not easy to synthesize) did in fact yield in-depth statements, descriptions, and recommendations that were particularly useful in understanding the experiences of the learners as Salend and Duhaney suggest.

3.6.4 Observation

Grade 12 learners' support activities and programmes were attended for the purpose of observation. These included a special meeting with grade 12 parents to discuss school requirements, academic progress, workshops on personal development and empowerment, study skills, motivation, careers, catch-up programmes such as Saturday classes, winter and spring schools. I was present at a weekend camp for survival skills organised by the school for grade 12s at the local SANDF military base. I also co-ordinated a study skills workshop for grade 12s and during that time I observed and took notes for the purpose of this study. Documentary evidence about such programmes will be dealt with in the next chapter on data analysis and presentation.

Observation enabled me to note how the respondents participated, communicated, and interacted with others in settings intended to enhance their motivation to learn. For ethical reasons they were informed of the researcher's attendance and purpose in advance. Major issues of investigation were participants' concerns and issues of discussion, observable attitudes, conversations and comments they made, patterns of behaviour and dominant personalities, context and atmosphere, level of participation and interest, perceptions and reactions. Field notes were made during observation. According to Adler and Adler (1980:33), "to study social life, it is incumbent upon researchers, whenever possible to adopt some sort of membership role in the scenes they study". Mine varied from setting to setting, between peripheral and active membership. Observation methods were unstructured and flexible, allowing a variety of observable attributes mentioned above to evolve.

3.6.5 Document analysis

A number of documents on the school, including its Mission and Vision, Code of Conduct for learners, Year Plan, School Performance Improvement Plan, and minutes of staff and S.G.B meetings informed the study. In documents such as the school's Mission and Vision, School Performance Improvement Plan, minutes of staff and S.G.B meetings, I examined the extent to which the school commits itself to producing quality results. Other documents like the Code of Conduct for learners, were used to gain insight into issues of discipline and the learners' commitment to academic progress and excellence. Although documents provide an excellent source of information about rationales, purposes and history, documents can be misleading and may not give a full picture of the actual scene (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995:224-225) and so when I examined the documents I did take that into consideration and looked at them with a "critical eye". This limitation was catered by the use of other data collection techniques like observation, interviews, and questionnaires as discussed in previous sections. Further, the fact that I was an insider contributed to my development of a full picture as will be shown in the next section.

3.6.6 Crystallization

The use of different data collection techniques led to the eliciting of richer data and more in-depth analysis, which has been the benefit of opting for this research design. Richardson (2000:934-938) offers the idea of crystallization in this regard. This idea is also supported by other authors in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:873, Janesick, 2000:391-394). The notion of crystallization recognises that any given approach to study the social world as a fact of life has many facets. The image of the crystal replaces that of a triangle. The crystal: “combines, symmetry and substance with an infinitive variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change and alter, but are not amorphous” (Richardson, 2000:934). The rich data I collected different angles, at different points in time and from different perspectives of learners, parents, educators and the school management team. By taking different perspectives, approaches and data sources, bias from any of these was offset by the application of another perspective, approach or data source (Fielding & Fielding 1986:96). The different data collection techniques allowed for multiple views to be expressed about the research question, all of which contribute to the depth of the research process.

3.7 Analysis of data

According to Yin (1989:105) “data analysis consists of examining, categorising, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of the study”. Agar (1980:164) points out that the goal of analysis is to identify those themes that summarise participants’ key concerns that recur throughout the data. He argues that there is no substitute for the “scanning of a qualitative eye” to identify those themes.

In chapter 4, specific data that belong together are identified and put together. The data is sorted and classified according to categories or themes that structured the questionnaires and focus groups. This process of systematic patterning (Miles & Huberman 1994) is employed to analyse all the data collected from questionnaires, focus groups, document analysis, observation and field notes. Patterns are

systematically identified and documented and concepts are linked to each other. Interpretation and meaning is given to the data linking it to the literature reviewed.

According to Bassey (1999:70) case study research usually produces a great deal of raw data. A useful way of handling and trying to make sense of the data is analysis which seeks to condense them into meaningful statements. These analytical statements need to be firmly based on the raw data. Analysing qualitative data is the process of making sense of, interpreting, or theorising the data. It is both art and science and it is undertaken by means of a variety of procedures that facilitate working back and forth between data and ideas. It includes the process of organising, reducing, and describing the data; drawing conclusions or interpretations from the data (Schwandt 1997).

Qualitative data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:150). McMillan and Schumacher (1993:480) also understand qualitative analysis as a systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interests. Sense is therefore made by finding and creating structure in the data, and conveying its meaning to others (Walker in Bloem 2001:30). In qualitative studies data collection and analysis typically go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation of the data (Creswell, 1994:153; Marshall & Rossman, 1999:151; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:482).

3.7.1 Analysing and collating raw data

To document learner profiles I organised the data from questionnaires according to headings obtained from the questionnaires. The questionnaire itself was divided into seven broad categories:

- A. Personal information
- B. Residential information
- C. Parents and economic activities
- D. Household members and their activities
- E. School

F. Higher education

G. Experiences that shape their vision for the future

From this raw data patterns that communicated the learners' socio-cultural background, school experiences, perceptions of higher education and envisioned future emerged. My task of understanding what is going on or "defining the situation" (Connole 1998) as an interpretive researcher at this point.

3.7.2 Coding

To understand the participants' prevailing life experiences that had an impact on their vision for the future I read and re-read interview transcripts of the learners separately. As themes emerged, I labelled them in order to link them to similar labels from other sources of data.

To ascertain ways in which parents, educators and the SMT supported and contributed in preparing the learners for higher education I read and re-read the interview transcripts in which parents, educators and the SMT gave richly descriptive statements of their views about various topics of the semi-structured open-ended interviews. In working back and forth between data and ideas I coded the data using in vivo codes to organise codes from the content of the data (Coffey & Atkinson 1996:32). This eased the process of identifying and understanding patterns which emerged. Codes were systematically attached to "chunks" of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs connected or unconnected to a specific setting (Miles & Huberman 1994:56), or in this case context.

3.8 Validity and generalisability

Validity generally refers to "the accuracy and value of the interpretations" (Eisenhart and Howe in LeCompte, Milroy and Preissle, 1992:664). It is a measure that accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure (Babbre & Mouton 2001).

Issues of validity in this study were addressed in several ways. Firstly, through the use of a multi-method research design which included multiple data methods and sources, i.e. learners, parents, educators and the SMT. Secondly, checks for alternative explanative explanations and negative evidence were made with learner research participants. Thirdly, comparison of findings with existing theory was done. Two recently published studies in similar fields were consulted (of Msutwana 2004 and Cosser, du Toit and Visser 2004). Unfortunately, discussion of findings with learners, parents and colleagues (educators and SMT) was not possible as learners went their separate ways after leaving school in 2002 and 2003 and I was transferred to another school through the redeployment process and I did not keep contact with my colleagues in the former school which was the research site.

Generalisability refers to the extent to which the results of the research can be applied or transferred to other settings (Yin 1986). Stake (1978) cited by Winegardner (nd) describes the generalisability of case studies as “naturalistic”, that is, context-specific and in harmony with reader’s experience, and thus “a natural basis for generalization”. This means that case study findings often resonate experientially or phenomenologically with a broad cross section of readers and in that way facilitate greater understanding of the phenomenon in question (Snow and Anderson 1991). It is considered legitimate to generalise based on the degree to which a case is representative of some larger population.

Readers may be able to generalise the findings of this study since the data was able to give rich descriptions of experiences, perceptions and views obtainable among young and about young people not only in this particular study context but elsewhere. Winegardner (nd) citing Guba and Lincoln (1981) points out a concern related to generalisability: case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to distorted or erroneous conclusions about the actual state or affairs a distinct from the report itself. Skilful data collection, analysis, and reporting can reduce the possibility of this outcome, although it is characteristic of the case study that interpretation goes beyond the mind of the researcher to that of the reader.

3.9 Research ethics

Ethics can be defined as “conforming to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group” (Babbie 1989:438). Jackson (1995:299) states that ethics revolve around two key issues: the researcher’s responsibility to the participants and to her discipline and the academic community. Throughout the research, I gave consideration to the following: consent by participants to be part of the study; transparency in terms of the researcher’s role and the use of data; confidentiality with regard to the identity of the participants in recording data; respect for freedom of expression by participants; being mindful of my own biases about the school as I had a dual role both as a researcher and a staff member at the school.

In the next chapter data collected from the enquiry will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

THE DATA: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the data that I collected from questionnaires completed by the research participants and the focus groups conducted with the research participants, the grade 12 learners in 2002 and in 2003 respectively. The other data are from interviews with parents and guardians, the principal, deputy principal, H.O.Ds and grade 12 educators at Phaphamani Secondary School. As the questionnaire was divided into the following sections: Personal and Residential Information; Parents and Economic Activities; Household Members and their Activities; School; Higher Education; Vision for the Future, the data is also presented under the same headings, except that personal, residential, household information and information on parents has been collated into appendices which appear as summary of learner profiles (appendix 6) and summary of data from parents (appendix 8).

The discussion of the data presented involves relating the data to the theories discussed in chapter 2, identifying emerging themes to help me answer my research questions and analysing meanings given in this study by the various categories of research participants to practices and processes taking place at the school and in the homes of the learner research participants.

From the data, it is clear that, in broad terms, the research participants are aspiring to higher education in search of economic independence, social mobility, personal empowerment or self-development and for altruistic reasons such as fulfilling obligations towards parents and family. A close examination of the information provided by the learners, parents, educators and the school management team provide a range of factors that seemed to be encouraging or limiting learners' aspirations to higher education. With regard to the second research question – what can the school do to support learners who aspire to HE? – recommendations drawn mainly from the findings, are made in chapter 5.

4.2 The learners' perspective

4.2.1 Perceived benefits of higher education

The grade 12 learner-participants identified the benefits of higher education as leading to a better life; getting a good job; earning a high income; knowledge and empowerment; success and respect from other people, a dream come true, providing for family, better opportunities; and a relaxed and comfortable life for oneself. In other words, for them pursuing higher education, is motivated by a need for economic independence, for social mobility, as well as for personal enrichment and empowerment. The quest for such needs reflects the fundamental idea that motives for learning in a particular setting are intertwined with socially and institutionally defined beliefs. This is reflected in the activity theory, in which Leontev (1978) argues that activity is not just doing something, but it is doing something that is motivated either by a biological need such as hunger or a culturally constructed need like the need to be literate in certain cultures. In this case, to study further will be an activity motivated by culturally constructed needs for economic independence, social mobility, personal enrichment and empowerment, fulfilling one's dream, achieving success, earning respect from others, providing for family and living a relaxed, comfortable life. These are in line with Maslow's higher needs or self-actualization needs to fulfil possibilities, to reach potential, to have meaningful goals for knowledge and achievements amongst others.

The motivation to study further also reflects the need for self-development. Self-development as discussed in Section 2.7 of Chapter 2 includes ambitions, aspirations and career choices to which the youth aspire. Moller (2001:3) writes that self-development refers to young people's personal development, which will earn each of them fulfilment as a person and a place in society. Moller argues that the youth have ambitions in life that shape their chosen development paths and that they are part of a web of social circumstances and conditions that will enhance or curtail their development potential. It is this web of social circumstances and conditions that enfolds the range of factors that influence grade 12 learners to aspire to higher education.

The data provided by learners revealed the following as factors that could enable them to pursue higher education: positive school experiences; information about higher education; a vision for the future; values ascribed to and support. Despite the enabling factors, other factors that are potentially limiting also came to the surface. These include: choice of school, negative school experiences; poor performance and/or failure; lack of information on higher education and on careers; lack of commitment, determination and motivation to study on the part of learners; lack of funding; the environment and unemployment. In the following sections, I will discuss both enabling and limiting factors in more detail.

4.2.2 School experiences

According to Louw, Edwards and Orr (2001: 72), a good deal of research has been done on the effects of failure on school achievement. Research shows that success tends to encourage students to raise their level of aspiration, whereas failure generally causes them to lower it, so there is a reason to provide opportunities for success for every learner in every classroom. Louw, Edwards and Orr (2001:72) state that this point is emphasized by Glasser (1969) who argues that if people are to have a chance to succeed in life in general, they must first experience success in one important domain of their lives. For success to occur at school, an adequate, healthy self-concept is a necessity and, in fact, a possibility available to every learner. In other words, a healthy, positive school experience is both the product and producer of adequate, competent educators and learners. Unfortunately, as will be indicated in the next few paragraphs, positive school experiences are not always available to all learners. Rather than learning about their possibilities and capabilities, some learners learn more about their limitations and shortcomings. Laevers (1997:15) argues that many factors can stop children from being able to learn. The way that Laevers describes the inability to learn is through each child's 'level of well-being'. He maintains that the level of well-being in children indicates how they are doing emotionally. The degree of well-being shows how much the educational environment succeeds in helping the child to feel at home, to be her/himself and have her/his emotional needs fulfilled (Laevers 1994:5).

To capture the research participants' school experiences and how they could possibly impact on the participants vision for the future I asked a range of questions about school, which included reasons for registering at Phaphamani; what they liked and disliked most about their school; their best and worst experiences at the school; the best memory of the school that they were taking away with them after grade 12; the role that the school had played in shaping their plans for the future; and what the school should do to support its learners who aspire to HE.

4.2.2.1 Reasons for registering at the present school

The reasons given for registering at the present school varied from educational, economic, convenience, proximity to home, to the availability of a place for enrolment. This is illustrated in Box 1 below:

Box 1 ²

Reasons for registering at Phaphamani Secondary school	
Lindie:	I Like the way it is situated and uniform.
Glen:	Because this school is near home
Devante:	To save money and not use transport.
Tia:	To carry on my education.
Shellow:	I saw development and good education.
Monde:	it is the best school that my parents can afford.
King:	There was no place in other schools.
Chosen:	It is the best school that my parents can afford.

4.2.2.2 What they liked most about the school

The responses given about what they liked most about their school were mainly about the relationship between the learners and educators, opportunities that Chosen thought would go to waste possibly due to lack of motivation to grab opportunities on the part of learners or to lack of funds for further studies, to which the school's poor matric results year offer year contribute, by failing to attracting bursaries; and career related activities. Teachers are seen to be understanding, parent-like, committed, reliable and easy to communicate with. This is shown in Box 2 below:

Box 2

What learners liked most about their school

Lindie:	My school has so many understanding teachers, they behave like parents to children.
Amaya:	It is a working relationship between learners and educators.
Reebo:	Communication between students and teachers.
Shellow:	The teaching and the reliability of the teachers.
King:	It's about learning, I learn a lot at this school.
Chosen:	It opened my mind to a wider range of knowledge. Full of opportunities that will probably go to waste.
Weja:	My school has many opportunities. Teachers are very committed.
Lizzie:	I like the opportunity that they give to learners to participate in sport and other things.

4.2.2.3 What learners disliked about the school

The respondents were asked to identify what they disliked about their school. The responses included conflict, poor matric results, and lack of discipline among learners and/or educators, corruption, unavailability of a wide repertoire of sporting codes. This indicated in Box 3 below:

Box 3

What learners disliked about the school

Lindie:	Conflict between the school and grade 12 learners, it disrupts the school so badly. It is about the farewell.
King:	It is the way our matric learners failed in previous years.
Tia:	When teachers are not in class, learners go out and sit in the sun.
Chosen:	Lack of discipline and drive on learners' side and some teachers.
Amaya:	Some of the educators do not care enough about their work.
Glen:	Discipline among learners, vandalism and late-coming.
Weja:	Corruption. Pupils don't listen to teachers. Students sometimes do not follow the rules of the school.
Lizzie:	I dislike the behaviour of learners who come late and stay outside at the gate.
Shellow:	The school is not so tidy.
Devante:	They concentrate on one sport activity.
Shadow:	I dislike the fact that only two codes of sport are played.

4.2.2.4 The best experiences the learners have had at the school

2. Participants are referred to by pseudonyms in all text boxes

Learners were asked about their best and their worst experiences at the school. The aim of these questions was to determine to what extent could learners' best and worst school experiences influence their future aspirations and whether these experiences have enabled the learners to learn to value anything pertaining to their present and future lives.

Playing sport for the school, excellent academic performance, leadership skills training, excursions organised by the school for grade 12 learners, and participating in other activities and programmes at the school were identified as the best experiences the learners have at the school. This indicates that excelling, exposure and developing their talents is important to them. The responses are indicated in Box 4 below.

Box 4

The best experiences learners had at their school	
Lizzie:	Playing sport for the school.
Lindie:	Playing netball & the P.E. ³ excursion.
Reebo:	Being in the soccer squad and being the best student in Business Economics in 2002.
Devante:	When I got the highest mark in Economics.
Shellow:	Being in the top 3 for academic performance in Term 1.
Glen:	The SANDF ⁴ excursion for grade 12s.
King:	Leadership skills training and being in the RCL ⁵ , P.E. excursion and educational trip to Port Alfred.
Weja:	To be selected as a member of the Media Club committee.
Chosen:	Involvement in the Media Club, learning journalistic skills, obtaining a Business Entrepreneurship Diploma, publishing a poem in the school's newsletter.

4.2.2.5 The worst experiences learners have ever had at this school

The worst experiences the respondents ever had at this school varied from bad results and poor performance, neglect, lack of care and professionalism in some teachers, lack of motivation in learners, consequences of being late, unreported sexual

³ P.E. refers to Port Elizabeth

⁴ SANDF is the South African National Defence Force

⁵ RCL means Representative Council of Learners

harassment, nervousness due to speaking in public. Box 5 below illustrates the learners' worst experiences.

Box 5

The learners' worst experiences at the school	
Lindie:	My school has never produced good results at the end of the year especially in grade 12.
Devante:	I didn't pass Biology for the last three terms, I'm afraid because I may fail Biology because of CASS ⁶ mark.
King:	Not too much care in lower grades, like grade 8 and 9 I was so angry because we were neglected.
Reebo:	Teachers sharing personal things with learners thinking they are doing the right thing. I feel angry about that because they should be professional. They become bad role models and make learners feel embarrassed.
Chosen:	Lack of commitment and motivation in learners. Some teachers set bad examples.
Shadow:	When I had to stay outside the gate while other students were writing a controlled test.
Glen:	To be locked out due to late-coming and missing periods in the process.
Tia:	Because corporal punishment is not used boys do sexual harassment.
Weja:	When I was the speaker on behalf of grade 11s at the matric farewell last year.

4.2.2.6 The best memory of the school that learners were taking away with them after grade 12

The learners' best memories included the teachers' efforts and encouragement to learners, educational excursions organised for them by the school, the learners' rewards for academic achievement and the realisation by Shadow that he will be one of the few learners who will pass matric and for Devante getting more than 50% in every subject every term.

Box 6

⁶ CASS refers to continuous assessment

The best memory of the school that learners were taking away with them after grade 12

Lindie:	My teachers trying very, very hard to produce good results this year.
Shellow:	The way they teach students is amazing.
Lizzie:	My teachers' words that we must work seriously from the start of the year.
Amaya:	When the school visited UPE.
Weja:	My best memory was when we visited the military base, I never thought I'd ever visit the military base.
Nomo:	The best memory is the day I went in to the military base, I was training like a soldier, and I was tired.
Reebo:	The travelling to Port Alfred, I was happy.
Devante:	The trip to Port Alfred. Getting more than 50% in every subject every term.
Chosen:	Collecting most grade 11 prizes in the prize giving last year.
Shadow:	The fact that I will be one of the few learners who will pass matric.

4.2.2.7 The role the school had played in shaping their plans for the future

In response to the above, various factors were given ranging from motivation, to guidance to nothing that the school has done for them. On the one hand, for most of the learners, the motivational talks, careers day and what teachers communicated to them seemed to have guided learners towards having the confidence to achieve their future goals and not to give up on seeking a career. On the other, Chosen and Nomo's views were different from the rest of the respondents. Chosen's future plans did not seem to have been shaped by what he had learnt at school. Nomo's view of the school's role in shaping her future plans seemed exaggerated in terms of being the "best". Possibly, what she said could mean that it was the "best" education and training the "school could give" under the circumstances. The responses are given in Box 7 below:

Box 7

The school's role in shaping learners' plans for the future

Lindie:	They took us grade 12 learners to Port Alfred for motivational talks.
Devante:	Careers' Day.
Amaya:	Confidence to achieve my goals.
Shellow:	School showed me that education is the key to success.
Glen:	The school has provided an educational gateway for my future.
Weja:	The teachers talk to us and show us which way to go.
Lizzie:	To achieve my goals and to never give up.
Nomo:	The best education and training it could give me.
Chosen:	Nothing precisely, I have always known where I want to be in life.

4.2.2.8 What the school needed to do to support its learners who want to pursue higher education

The research participants' responses were similar and touched on study skills, learner support, career guidance and counselling. Learners seemed able to identify what they would require in order to reach their goals. They were also aware of what they should have been getting from the school that they were not getting. Their responses are given in Box 8 below:

Box 8

What the school should do to support its learners who aspire to higher education

Lindie:	They should provide learners with good equipment for their studies, support them by guiding them so that learners know what they can study in the following year.
Tia:	The school should guide learners in study skills.
Shellow:	Give information on higher education and support learners all the way.
King:	The school should provide exam skills.
Shadow:	The school should provide the learners with a Guidance teacher so that grade 12s know exactly what they are about to get into.
Glen:	The school should provide career counselling and guidance to learners.
Weja:	Persuade the learners to work very hard, be more committed and co-operate with teachers in order to do well.
Lizzie:	Give information to learners about what they can do to go further to higher education.
Chosen:	Make learners realise and appreciate the importance of education in one's life otherwise there's nothing much one can do if they don't wise up for their own sake.

4.3 Higher Education

4.3.1 Where learners would like to study and their intended field of study

Seven of the thirteen research participants wanted to study at universities and six wished to enter technikons. Six out of thirteen respondents intended studying for careers in the fields of science, technology and engineering. There was one research participant interested in pursuing each of the following fields: medicine, law, journalism, cartography, arts and languages.

The learners' subject choices for the intended fields of study were appropriate and so were the subject groupings to effect a senior certificate pass with university endorsement. However, their achieved grades in most cases were in-adequate and in some cases they were converted to lower levels to effect a pass symbol or pass with endorsement. Details of the participants' subjects, symbols and final results are tabled in Appendix 7.

4.3.2. Information, entrance requirements and accessing financial aid

Six research participants said they had information about universities and technikons and about their proposed fields of study. The other seven did not have any information either about institutions of higher learning or about their intended fields of study. Regarding entrance requirements for the intended studies, only nine out of thirteen knew the requirements for admission. Only seven of the research participants said they knew how to access financial aid for higher education studies, the other six said they did not know how to get financial aid. Those who had information about higher education accessed it from the school, careers day, or a resource centre in town. One respondent got information about higher education from his sister, who had studied at university and qualified as a social worker.

4.3.3 The benefits of higher education

Responses to what the research participants saw as the benefits of higher education were similar and reflected a desire for success, job security, high income and an improved quality of life. The responses are illustrated in Box 9 below:

Box 9

What research participants saw as the benefits of higher education	
Lindie:	A better life.
Devante:	You get a good job and earn high income.
Shellow:	Empowerment and knowledge.
Shadow:	A better life, success and respect from other people.
Amaya:	It will be a dream come true.
Chosen:	You get to provide for your family, better opportunities for your kids. A relaxed and comfortable life for yourself.
Nomo:	People get better jobs when they have higher education.

4.3.4 Qualities learners possess that they thought would help them succeed in their higher education studies

In their responses learners listed the following qualities: ability to work hard, determination, perseverance, self-confidence and being a quick learner. The learners seemed genuinely able to identify the qualities they needed to possess to make a success of their studies, and did not seem to be repeating what was said by motivational speakers who had addressed them about qualities needed for success.

Box 10

Qualities that learners possessed that would help them succeed in their higher education studies	
Devante:	Hard work and not giving up hope.
Reebo:	Willingness to achieve my vision.
Shellow:	Confidence.
Glen:	I'm a hard worker.
Chosen:	Being a quick learner, pride in myself.
Nomo:	Knowledge and time, I'll never waste time because time wasted never returns.
King:	I am a hard worker.
Tia:	Ability to study hard.
Amaya:	Belief in support from parents.

4.3.5 How the learners' perceived their parents' and wider family's feelings about their plans to pursue higher education

All the participants perceived their parents and family as supportive of their aims to pursue higher education. For Chosen, whose siblings had higher education qualifications, pursuing higher education was a “family thing”. Devante, whose parents were both unemployed and “bankrupt”, said his mother was “overwhelmed” by his idea of wanting to pursue higher education. Shadow seemed pessimistic about entering higher education and did not “see anyone helping me get into an institution”. The responses are indicated in Box 11 below:

Box 11

Learners’ perceptions of how their parents and wider family felt about them pursuing higher education

Tia:	They feel great, they support me.
Amaya:	They are very supportive.
Glen:	They are supportive of the idea.
Chosen:	Very supportive and motivating, it’s a family thing.
Lindie:	They think that I am going to succeed and they are so proud of me.
Lizzie:	My mother and my family are proud of me, they are impressed.
Weja:	They are very interested and want me to go for it, also proud of me.
Devante:	My mother, she’s overwhelmed.
Shadow:	They feel great about it, but I don’t see anyone helping me to get into an institution.

4.3.6 How educators felt about the learners’ idea of pursuing higher education studies

The learners perceived the educators as supportive of their endeavours, proud of the learners and proud of themselves. They also thought it was an opportunity that should be grabbed and that it would enable the learners to improve themselves. This is shown in Box 12 below:

Box 12

Learners' perceptions of how their educators felt about them pursuing higher education

Glen:	They are supportive as well.
Chosen:	They support me fully and take pride in me.
Amaya:	They give me strength and support.
Shellow:	They say I must go for it.
Lindie:	They are happy for me and they think I am going to improve myself.
Weja:	They feel that if I have the chance I must grab it and go for it while I can.
King:	They just say it is a good idea.
Lizzie:	Teachers are encouraging us to do higher education studies.
Nomo:	They are also proud.
Devante:	They are proud of themselves.

4.3.7 Information on HE

Information about where and what learners wanted to study, entrance requirements, duration of study, and accessing funding for studies was another factor that seemed to influence the decisions of grade 12 learners to pursue higher education.

From the data, the SMT was aware of learners wanting to pursue HE (Section 4.11.1) through learners who approached members of the SMT to seek information about HE. According to members of the SMT, learner support and other special programmes for learners wanting to pursue higher education included information sessions about higher education, careers and accessing funding (Section 4.11.4). However, this did not seem either to be a regular or an ongoing practice. Neither was it detailed nor specific as the Principal said “ ... we normally invite speakers from institutions of higher learning to address them”; “Last year we invited Mrs H to address them about what is expected in higher education”. This makes one understand why 7 out of the 13 learner-participants said they did not have any information either about institutions of higher learning or about their intended studies; and only 9 out of 13 knew the requirements for admission. Those who had information about higher education said that they accessed it from the school, careers day or a resource centre in town. One respondent, Chosen, got information about higher education from his sister, who was a social worker and had obviously studied at university. Considering the very low level of education that parents themselves had (see Appendix 6-only Devante’s father

had studied beyond matric), it would not have been possible for learners to get such information from home. A grade 12 learner from Phaphamani, who was not part of this study, was interviewed by a journalist from the town newspaper, the *Grocott's Mail*, about her future plans. She said she wanted to study Tourism Management at Port Elizabeth Technikon, travel around the world, maybe to Zanzibar and Hawaii. When asked where she got the inspiration to pursue a career in tourism from, she replied *"on TV and from pamphlets from universities and technikons"* that offer studies in tourism. She said she did not receive much career advice from her family about her career choice: *"I live with my older sister – she advises me about my future, but she says I must do what I want"* (Dewing 2004). In my view, the school needs to provide a lot more detailed and relevant information sessions and to encourage learners to go out and seek information; *"and show learners how to access resources elsewhere"* as the Home Economics educator said (Box 18).

A quality-of-life studies research study conducted in Grahamstown indicated that Grahamstown was regarded as a leading educational centre, known for its excellent secondary educational institutions. It is home to Rhodes University, which sponsors a number of local students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Grahamstown is also known as South Africa's premier arts and science festival centre. Local schools are encouraged and even given the opportunity to attend the festivals through sponsorship and provision of transport to participate in festivals that open up a window on the world and stimulate personal development. The town centre and university campus are within sight of Grahamstown East and even within walking distance, and so local youth have access to development opportunities and information (Moller 2003: 55). Thus, Moller seems to suggest that Grahamstown youth need to access the information and opportunities that are readily available to them. A grade 12 learner from a previously so-called Coloured school in Grahamstown East seemed to have risen to this challenge when he wrote about what matric means to him in the local newspaper, the *Grocott's Mail*: *"I try to prepare myself for the next step, which is of course, tertiary education. ... I try to be **information-rich** to carefully plan my future"* [emphasis mine] (Jack 2004). In contrast to Moller, Appadurai (2001) believes that the poor could access resources that are required to alter the conditions of poverty if they, like their rich counterparts, had opportunities to link material goods and immediate opportunities to more general and generic possibilities and options.

Further, Appadurai claims, the poor, due to their lack of opportunities to practice the use of what he terms navigational capacity, have a more brittle horizon of aspirations (Section 1.6 in Chapter 1). In sum, it seems that the school needs to “*give information on higher education*” as Shellow says. Learners “*should not relax*”, according to the Accounting educator, but need to “*access resources elsewhere*”, the Home Economics educator said.

4.4 Envisioning the future

4.4.1 Learners’ vision of themselves for the future, what they are doing to make it a reality, and what their needs are to make the vision a reality

Respondents envisioned themselves as professional people with academic qualifications and who were successful in life. They emphasized hard work, making extra efforts in studying constantly and imagining the future as already there, when asked what they were doing at the time of the research, to make their vision a reality. A matric pass, money to study, information, support from family, concentration on their studies and the determination not to give up were identified as requirements to realise their future visions as demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1

How they envision themselves in the future		What they are doing presently to make the vision a reality	What they need to make the vision a reality
Devante:	Best engineer from Grahamstown	Concentrating and working hard in my studies	To concentrate in my work and not to give up hope
Reebo:	Obtaining a degree	Being serious and willing to go an extra mile	Pass matric, money to study
Chosen:	Well-educated man, giving something back to the community	Loving every minute of school. Picturing myself in greener pastures in the future	To dream, to act, to be responsible, to stand head-high, proud and unshaken
Tia:	Being a social worker	Studying hard at school	Determination not to give up

Amaya:	Have my own house and family	Doing all I have to do to get the education I want	Money to go to university and support from parents
Shellow:	Succeeding in the business world	Studying as hard as I can	Finish my studies first then start my own business
Lindie:	Becoming a medical doctor	Studying very, very hard to make my dream come true	Support from family, money, a place to stay
King:	In a suitable job	So far nothing	Support and information
Weja:	That I will make it in life, with God all things are possible	Imagining that I am already there and doing that	A lot of support from my family and relatives

4.4.2 How they envisioned themselves in 3–4 years time and how they envisioned themselves in 5–10 years time.

Most of the respondents saw themselves as just completing their studies in three to four years, settling into their careers, and fulfilling their personal ambitions in five to ten years. However, others such as Tia, Shadow and Lindie did not seem to be able to place themselves appropriately and they displayed changes of interest in the distant future. In the questionnaire, Tia indicated that she wanted to study science at university and did not mention a wish to become a pilot later on in her life; Lindie's wish was to study science or medicine at university and to become a doctor and not a business-woman as she later indicated; Shadow had indicated a wish to study engineering at university, but saw himself as pursuing a career in designing and making sports cars in 3-4 years time and as a professional pool, chess and volley ball player in 5-10 years time. The evident lack of consistency in choosing a career could be attributed to two factors. The first is the difficulty that young people generally encounter in making decisions. The second could be the evident lack of guidance at the school, which will be discussed in detail later in the chapter. Table 2 below demonstrates how the learners saw themselves in the near and distant future.

Table 2

How they see themselves in 3–4 years time		How they see themselves in 5–10 years time
Glen:	I envisage myself doing my final year at university or technikon	I envisage a working life and being economically viable
Chosen:	Probably just graduated and working for a big shot company, in the U.S if possible	Just settled, with a child, running a family business. Sponsoring and maybe even coaching some young boys' rugby or cricket team. To have written at least two best sellers. I would also love to run a home for street kids, raise funds to educate them.
Reebo:	I would probably finish my first degree and have a job, if have money I'd be married but no children and I would like a car	I will be a father of one or two children but not more than that. I'd also like to have my house maybe working for a company, government or maybe running my business
Devante:	Doing B.Sc Honours	A well-known engineer in the Eastern Cape coming from the City of Saints
Tia:	At university	Learning to drive an aeroplane, being a pilot
Shadow:	I see myself pursuing a career in designing and making of sports cars in South Africa	I see myself as a professional pool, chess and volleyball player. I also see myself with my own house, my own car and most of all independent. I also see myself as a very responsible young man who is taking care of his family
Weja:	I see myself as a fully employed broadcasting journalist, having my own house and family, driving my own car, with a lot of cash coming my way and returning my mother's pounds	
Amaya:	I'll have my own surgery, house and car, maybe be a father of a child	I'll be one of the best doctors in S.A., I intend to help many people who need help

Lindie:	I see myself as a doctor who has her own surgery, house and a car, as wife with two kids	I see myself as a business woman with own designer clothes, who also trains models to become supermodels
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4.4.3 Vision for the future: what learners were doing to make it a reality

Learners envisioned themselves as professional people with academic qualifications who were successful in life. They also emphasized their hard work and dedication to make their vision a reality (Table 1 in Section 4.7.2). This perception was no different from findings of studies that focused on the youth of Grahamstown East. The studies showed that despite the impact of poverty, unemployment and inadequate education, the youth were overwhelmingly positive about themselves and keen to improve their situations (Manona in Slabbert *et al.* 1994, cited in Moller 2003:55). Another study conducted for the same research programme revealed that the majority of Grahamstown East youth stated that they would not be prepared to work as manual labourers and saw self-employment as a last resort (Haines and Wood 1994, cited in Moller 2003: 56). Although the vision of the learners seemed like an impossible dream considering their impoverished backgrounds (evident in Appendix 6), the fact that parents had not made any financial provision for their children to study further, and the common practice that only a minimal number of learners from this school become successful professionals with academic qualifications, it was a possibility if the learners could apply the hard work and dedication they claimed to have to make their vision a reality.

Matric learners and matric results have for many years been a topic of debate in South African media. Recently, an editorial opinion on the topic in the Grahamstown's bi-weekly newspaper, the Grocott's Mail stated that these learners

still have aspirations of living lives that are not blighted by poverty. But without tertiary qualifications and poor matric results they are destined for menial jobs – which will affirm and entrench their disadvantage and marginalisation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of these matriculants look down on these jobs” (Petros 2004:7).

Being “destined for menial jobs – which will affirm and entrench their disadvantage” corresponds with the critical theory’s claim that working class children are predisposed by their socialization to enter manual occupations and in a way this seems to provide evidence that cultural reproduction exists in education.

The vision of themselves that learners have for the future is in stark contrast with critical theory’s view that working class children are predisposed by their socialisation to enter manual occupations. Further, contrary to critical theory’s claim, there was documented evidence that with qualities such as determination, bravery and personal triumph in the face of poverty, race and gender discrimination, one can still rise above such a predisposition and overcome hardships, and deprivation through education, particularly higher education (Campbell 1994; Everatt & Jennings undated; Haines & Wood 1994; Manona 1994; Moller 2001). Learners identified qualities in themselves that they thought would help them succeed in their higher education studies. The qualities included: ability to work hard, ability to learn quickly, determination, perseverance and self-confidence (Box 10).

4.5 The most important thing in life

Revealing what they valued most in life, some of the research participants highlighted the importance of education, as shown in Box 14(a) below.

Box 13(a)

What learners perceive to be the most important thing in life.	
Nomo:	I feel education is important.
Tia:	It’s very important to learn.
Amaya:	To get a profession.
Shellow:	Education because it is a key to success.
Lindie:	Education is so important.
King:	To get education.

Other respondents gave somewhat different views from the ones given above. Their views are expressed in Box 14(b) below:

Box 13(b)

What other learners view as most important in life.	
Weja:	To achieve your goals in life is number one priority.
Glen:	To do the right thing at the right time.
Reebo:	To know where you come from and where you are going.
Lizzie:	Doing what you want with your life.
Shadow:	To share your life with the people you love and respect.
Chosen:	Belief in oneself, heart, vision, dreams, focus, responsibility, confidence, drive, discipline.
Devante:	Not to be a hypocrite.

Although the responses in Box 14(a) seemed genuine and relevant on the one hand, they could possibly indicate what learners wanted me (as an educator at the school) to hear, rather than being what they genuinely thought is important for them in life, as indicated by others in Box 14(b). However, I do not doubt that learners in this study had their own independent thoughts and opinions about issues in their lives.

4.6 Support

4.6.1 What learners thought parents and family, school and community needed to do to assist learners who wanted to pursue higher education after grade 12

Research participants' responses as to what they thought parents, families, school and community needed to do to assist learners who aspired to higher education showed that a great deal of support was needed by learners from home and from school. This is demonstrated in Box 15 below:

Box 14

What learners thought parents and family, school and community should do to assist learners who want to pursue higher education	
Nomo:	Support, help.
Amaya:	Support and help with everything they need.
Glen:	They should provide all the necessary support: emotional, financial and otherwise.
Lizzie:	Parents and family must give their children support, community must help to ensure that children go to school everyday.

Shadow:	The school should provide the grade 12 learners with support and help so that the learners know exactly what career they should pursue in life and what the requirements are.
Tia:	Parents should not disturb the learners, teachers must work, and the community must support learners.
Lindie:	Parents, family, school and community should play a good role, they should donate bursaries, offer support programmes and classes.
Devante:	They should form a community forum that will look after grade 12 learners, just for encouragement not necessarily to give money.
Reebo:	Give motivation to students, but also give them the freedom to choose.
Shellow:	They should give them courage and make sure that they give support, advice and consider learners as the ones who want to achieve.
Chosen:	Parents should take the initiative of teaching their children. Motivational speakers, career choices, decision-making workshops should be introduced early. The pressure from parents, the way they act make or break our confidence. They should be our source of inspiration and the strength we hold onto.

4.6.2 Support given to learners to ensure they enrol in higher education and succeed

There was a variety of responses to this question that included encouraging the child to work hard at school in order to pass and seeking financial assistance. One parent, Chosen's mother, said she encouraged him to communicate openly with her and the family; they provided him with information about careers, access to funding and job opportunities. Support or lack thereof is another factor that could influence learners' decisions to pursue higher education. Learners perceived their parents and family as supportive of their aims to pursue higher education (Box 12). Learners also found educators to be supportive of the learners' vision of pursuing higher education. Educators were perceived as proud of the learners and proud of themselves (Box 13).

Whalley (2001:21) acknowledges that children can become very effective decision-makers and that they need to be able to plan and translate their plans into actions. Further, she makes the point that to help children develop in this area, it was critically important to take children's central cognitive concerns as a starting point. Finally, she suggests that adults such as educators and parents need to be centrally concerned with the provision of a rich and challenging curriculum (Whalley 2001: 2). Although Whalley is referring to a different context, in essence what she is saying is that children need the support of adults such as parents and educators to succeed in what

they do. Parental support, love and encouragement from the parents' perspective and lack thereof from the educators and SMT's perspective will be discussed in Sections 5.5.2 and 5.5.3 respectively.

Almost all the parents who participated in this research had the hope that their children's future would be bright, their children's dreams would be realised, their children's goals would be achieved, and that their children would be successful (see Appendix 8). The same sentiments were expressed by a grade 12 learner from a similar Grahamstown East township school in a Grocott's Mail article about what matric means to him: *"It means to me that **my parents, friends and community will believe in me**, that I am capable of gathering information and that I am strong enough to sustain the pressure"* [emphasis mine]. Further on in the article, he wrote: *"Teachers are trying by all means to make us ready for tertiary institutions. They are working fingers to the bones to ready us. I believe that kind of **faith they have in us will make us succeed**"* [emphasis mine] (Mthwisha 2004).

This links up with Msutwana's findings that: firstly, learners are convinced that teacher support will contribute to their motivation to engage in their schoolwork. Learners expect their teachers to support them as learners. The issue of unsupportive teachers has led to misunderstandings between learners and teachers, learner drop-out, and failure to understand schoolwork. Further, Msutwana claims, learners expect their parents to support them financially and emotionally. Children rely heavily on parental encouragement for their motivation to study. When they observe that parents do not care about them and their education, children "do foolish things" (2004:115-116). To sum up, learners need to be supported by parents and educators. In the light of the above, it is clear that support from parents and teachers is a factor that learners think can influence their determination of learners to go further with their education.

4.7 Limiting factors

In the previous paragraphs, what was drawn from the data were factors that seemed to influence grade 12 learners to aspire to higher education. Having looked very carefully at the data there were other factors that had the potential to prohibit learners

from pursuing higher education. These factors were: choice of school; negative school experiences; poor performance and failure; lack of information about higher education and careers; lack of motivation, commitment and determination on the part of learners; lack or shortage of funding; as well as the unfavourable environment in which the school is situated. In the following section I will focus on factors that can stifle learner aspirations.

4.7.1 Choice of school and negative school experiences

4.7.1.1 Choice of school

Reasons given by learners for registering at Phaphamani High School varied from educational, *“to carry on my education”*; economic, *“to save money and not use transport”*, *“it is the best school my parents can afford”*; availability of a place for enrolment *“there was no place in other schools”*, *“It was the only school that could enrol me”*; to proximity *“because this school is near home”* (Box 1). None of the participants referred to the school’s ethos, facilities and resources, academic and extra-curricular activities or the school’s grade 12 pass rate.

Parents’ reasons for enrolling their children at this school were mainly proximity, *“it is close by”*, *“it is quite close for them to walk”*; belief that it is a good school, *“it is a good school, tuition is good”*, *“we saw children from this school pass”*, that there is discipline, *“it was recommended, there is discipline”*, *“there are strict rules here”* and there is nothing wrong with the school, *“I didn’t find anything wrong with the school”*. The reasons seemed adequate to meet basic needs such as proximity and affordability, which help to save money and did not take into account the school’s matric rate.. This is understandably so, considering the rate of unemployment among parents, their occupation, income and its sources, level of education and position in the community (See Appendix 6). Given the evidence in terms of poor throughput rate, diminishing enrolment figures and so forth, this view of the school given by the parents is an obvious misconception.

Although it seems economically suitable for parents to enrol their children at this school, from the educational point of view, it does automatically disadvantage the

children. The reasons being: the lack of facilities and resources at the school, the unfavourable environment within which the school's situated, such as poverty, unemployment, crime, drug dealing and alcoholism. This is brought to the fore by descriptive statements made by educators and SMT members as reflected below:

Lack of facilities and resources

BE Educator: *This school needs more facilities, for example, here they still use old typewriters and computers are not accessible. Educators need to be trained to be computer literate so that they can develop the learners. Things such as photocopiers are not there, they are there, but they are in a state of disrepair due to lack of funds, no toner, there's always a shortage of resources ... sometimes there are no textbooks. Even when as a teacher you want to photocopy some material, the photocopier is not working and so you have to teach using a textbook for the whole year in grade 12. I can't cover the syllabus.*

HOD Languages: *Resources are limited and you use whatever you have at your disposal.*

Lack of resources in township schools is a common occurrence, but is not necessarily a deterrent for all learners to fulfil their aspirations for the future. A grade 12 learner from a neighbouring school had this to say in a *Grocott's Mail* article about what matric meant to him: *"It merely means that I should go the extra mile with my studies due to the fact that my school is suffering severely from the **lack of resources and equipment is needed for a better learning and teaching environment**"* (Mthwisha 2004). For many other learners who do not have the determination, who are not able to go an extra mile, the lack of resources contributes enormously to their failure rate, thus disqualifying them for higher education. Recent research on the motivation of learners in a deprived environment demonstrates that proper educational facilities are needed at school to keep learning meaningful and interesting. To facilitate learning and growth, supportive educational resources are to be utilised as learners miss out a lot from not experimenting and linking content to real matter (Msutwana 2004:113).

4.7.1.2 Negative school experiences

Negative school experiences can be a limiting factor to learners who want to further their education to tertiary level. The research participants identified their worst experiences at this school mainly as: the school's bad results and learners' poor performance, lack of care and the absence of professionalism in some educators and lack of motivation in learners. Only one learner mentioned each of these: consequences of being late for school and sexual harassment by the boys (Box 5). What learners disliked most about the school was conflict resulting from the matric farewell (a common occurrence that has been an issue in township schools over the last few years); poor matric results; lack of discipline among learners and some educators; corruption; unavailability of a wide range of sporting codes (Box 3). Some of these are learner-produced negative experiences like *"to be locked out due to late-coming and missing tuition in the process"*, *"lack of discipline and drive on the learners' side"*. Other experiences are generated by the school: *"Some educators do not care enough about their work"*, *Not too much care in lower grades, like grade 8 and 9, I was so angry because we were neglected"*. *"Teachers sharing personal things with learners thinking they are doing the right thing. I feel angry about that because they should be professional. They become bad role models and make learners feel embarrassed"* (Box 5).

Neglect and lack of professionalism among educators

Looking carefully at the learner's worst experiences at the school, such as the school's bad results, learners' poor performance, lack of professionalism and neglect of learners by educators in the lower grades (Paragraph 4.5.6), it is possible that these experiences can trigger negative feelings such as fear, resentment, shame, anger and helplessness. These feelings can create barriers to learning. Goodyer and Fourie claim that educators can indeed be responsible for erecting barriers to learning, through neglecting the learners and/or behaving unprofessionally towards learners through verbal abuse or sexual harassment. Educators then, need to be able, (and are primarily responsible) to identify these barriers. In addition, educators need to understand how these barriers can affect learners' learning and development so that they can assist the learners in the most effective way possible. Furthermore, educators

need also to be aware of their contribution, responsibility and role in hindering the learning process. (Goodyer & Fourie, undated. Msutwana (2004:114-115) found that teaching practices like poor instruction and absence from class are not conducive to learner motivation. Learners constantly observe their teachers, and expect their enthusiasm for education to be reciprocated. This places a heavy responsibility on the teacher. Msutwana adds that a teacher's attitude and personality play a role in the classroom. A healthy positive attitude towards the learner and the learning process implies that learners will be inspired to pursue their goals and learn. Inappropriate teacher behaviour, such as conducting affairs with learners can result in learners not respecting such teachers.

4.7.2 Lack of information on HE and careers

Lack of information on higher education may impact negatively on the learners' decisions to pursue higher education. In this study, it is clear that more than half of the research participants (7 out of 13) did not have information on higher education and possible careers. This is evident from what was said by learners, educators and the SMT members in the data about what the school should do to support learners aspiring to higher education.

Shellow: Give information on higher education and support learners all the way.

Lizzie: Give information to learners about what they can do to go further to higher education.

HOD Humanities: They also need vocational guidance in terms of choosing correct paths.

Deputy Principal: There is no career guidance, kids are ignorant as to what is out there, what is possible and what is not possible for them. They are, like trapped in a small world. They only know what is going on around them. They don't actually know what's going on out there and sometimes it's ignorance or just lack of career guidance on the part of the teachers or parents cause most of the parents are not qualified parents or professionals.

Kids do not know what's going on there, do not know what entrance requirements are for universities, technikons, colleges and so forth. They do not know whether these institutions are offering bursaries, those types of things.

HOD Humanities: You find that many of them just keep quiet and that shows they do not know what they are going to do next year if they pass.

The evident lack of this vital information is a limiting factor to a decision to pursue higher education, for two reasons. Firstly, by and large, not everybody has the

audacity, the bravery or the will to venture into the unknown. This is more so with the young, the ignorant, the inexperienced and the poor, such as the learners in this study and their peers. Secondly, this seems to reflect the remnants of the inequalities and injustices of the well-known, but notorious Bantu Education. Bantu Education, in a nutshell, was designed to relegate the African child to manual labour, never to become an academically qualified professional. This primary purpose of Bantu Education, one could argue, is a typical reflection of critical theory's claim that the learning process is technically and socially fragmented and minimal regard is paid to pupils' interests. In other words, working class learners are not meant to see an educational future beyond school but are meant to become part of the unskilled labour force. Critical theorists maintain that pupils are not in control of their education. This "production process" at schools (discussed in Section 2.4.1 Chapter 2) deprives pupils of control over their lives in a similar manner that a production process in the factory does so far the workers.

4.7.3 Lack of commitment, determination and motivation

Lack of commitment, determination and motivation on the part of the learners seems to have the potential to hamper the decisions of grade 12 learners to embark on higher education and is evident in the data from learners, educators and the SMT:

Chosen: *Lack of commitment and motivation in learners.*

Reebo: *Give motivation to students but also give them the freedom to choose.*

BE Educator: *Firstly, they need motivation because they lack motivation.*

Accounting Educator: *Lack of commitment in their work makes them study at the last moment.*

HOD Languages: *... they are demotivated.*

BE Educator: *Due to the learners' lack of motivation, they don't ask you as a learners' teacher to stay after school. There is a huge lack of commitment on their side.*

Home Economics Educator: *... our learners are not committed, they are not interested ... they don't appreciate what we are doing. They need to be committed too*

HOD Maths & Science: *They don't have motivation to go and do something.*

While the learner-participants in this study show commitment, determination and motivation to go further with their education, many of their peers, do not seem to have the commitment, determination and motivation to pull themselves out of their

predicament. The Accounting Educator referred to this and said: “*Most of them know that there are no means at home so they are not going anywhere*”.

Lack of motivation, lack of resources and lack information pertaining to higher education, is evidently a reproduction of economic relations. Because the majority of the learners are not motivated to either perform well enough to obtain a good matric pass to attract bursaries for higher education or they lack the determination to fulfil any ambition or dream to improve their lot through higher education, they end up being only good enough to join the labour force and that way a vicious circle of the reproduction of economic relations occurs.

4.7.4 Lack of funding

When research participants were asked about what they needed in order to qualify for and succeed in higher education, funding among other things, was mentioned by learners, parents, educators and SMT members.

Reebo: *Pass matric, **money** to study.* [emphasis mine]

Amaya: ***Money** to go to university, support from parents.* [emphasis mine]

Lindie: *Support from family, **money**, a place to stay.* [emphasis mine]

It is evident that funding for further study is a crucial need. Firstly, parents had not made financial provision for their children’s further education. Putting away money did not seem possible given their low income, the high rate of unemployment in the Eastern Cape and in Grahamstown in particular and their own level of education. When asked what provision they had made for their children’s higher education studies, some parents had this to say (Appendix 8):

Amaya’s aunt: *His uncle is still **unemployed**. There is **nothing prepared** for him.*

Chosen’s mother: *As a pensioner it is **not easy to save** money. His sister is the one who contributes towards his education. She has **applied for a bursary** on his behalf.*

Devante’s father: *I’m **unemployed**, his mother is also unemployed. Financially, ... we are **bankrupt**.* [emphasis mine]

Lindie’s mother: *Because **we are poor** people from the farm, we were **not able to prepare anything**.* [emphasis mine]

Weja’s mother: *I **haven’t made preparations** yet.* [emphasis mine]

Secondly, the learners' poor performance does not attract bursaries. The Accounting educator said: *"Although they have the ability, they attain a lower symbol. I usually say to them that if one is determined and one knows what one wants, bursaries are always there. If one gets good results one can never say one has no means, one markets oneself with one's results"*.

Educators also confirmed that lack of funding was an issue affecting the learner's decisions to pursue higher education.

Home Economics Educator: *Financial issues affect them because sometimes they want to go, but there is not enough finance.*

Maths Educator: *Some of them, first of all are in financial need. Others want to study, but, due to lack of money, they can't continue.*

Lack of finance affects learners at this school at two levels. The first level is the family level where parents had not been able to make provision for their children's further education. The second level is the school level where teaching materials for practical lessons is not supplied due to lack of finance. The Home Economics educator stated it succinctly when she related:

"The big stumbling block is finance. I don't get enough support from Principal because when I teach about meat, milk, eggs, whatever, I should follow that up with a practical for the learners to see the changes that take place when meat or eggs come into contact with heat and so on. I am supposed to be doing that after each chapter, but I'm not able to do it because Principal will always say there's no money, there's no school fees. I end up having to pile up my practical or do a practical once a year. When I do it once a year I am not able to cover all the chapters at the same time. So with regard to practicals I'm not doing enough and I don't think I ever will, because Home Economics is basically practical and it is the practical that makes the learner understand the work more than theory. You have to apply theory practically.

The constant unavailability of funding at the school leads to a constant shortage of resources, which hampers the performance of learners making them victims of unskilled labour in the long run. This, again, indicates the link with idea of the reproduction of economic relations in education.

While lack of funding seems to be an issue which can determine the learners' access to HE in this particular study, on student aspirations and higher education realities, Human Sciences Research Council's study indicate that lack of funding is seemingly not the biggest barrier to access to higher education (Cosser, Du Toit & Visser 2004:69).

4.7.5 The environment: poverty and unemployment

The unfavourable environment can influence the decisions of grade 12 learners to pursue higher education in a negative way. The environment in which the research participants' school and homes are situated is riddled with crime, poverty and unemployment. This is reflected in the information supplied by educators, the SMT and the parents.

Environment and poverty

Principal: *The school is situated, I'd say in a poorly developed area. For example, right at the back we have, ... a squatter camp ... an area of that level and you find that ... the rate of crime is very high. I understand social factors influence education. The rate of unemployment is high and you find that their grandparents through old age pensions support most learners here. There are people who sell liquor, drugs and so on. They are seen to be having money, driving beautiful cars, wearing smart clothes, you know. That may not make our learners see education as a need.*

Deputy Principal: *Then also the poverty level because some of these kids come from very poor backgrounds, man, and they just want to move up the social ladder and for them the only way out is to study after school, just to escape the poverty and just go up the social ladder.*

HOD Humanities: *You know, our school is in a poor area ... it is in a poor area.*

HOD Languages: *... we are coming from a poor community as the school.*

BE Educator: *Going back to the impoverished background of the learners, you find that they have no books – the basic things – no uniform, they complain about being sent back home for uniform. It may happen that there is really no money to buy it.*

Unemployment

Devante's father: *I'm unemployed, his mother is unemployed.*

HOD Languages: *You'll find that there are people who are having better qualifications, their own brothers and sisters who are still not able to find jobs.*

Principal: *... they find that their older siblings who are qualified teachers are unemployed. It's 4 years now, they have no jobs ... with the current situation in the*

country I would find it very, very difficult to convince a learner to go to a tertiary institution because he'll simply refer to a sibling who is qualified, but is jobless.

HOD Languages: People come from institutions of higher learning and they can't find jobs. ... people who've got better qualifications are the worst people in terms of making a living.

In my view, the attitude with which principal and HOD Languages expressed their views about qualified, but unemployed youth, seemed limiting and narrow-minded. There seemed to be an unwillingness to “*convince learners to go to a tertiary institution*” and a belief in what appears to be an exaggerated view that “*people who've got better qualifications are the worst people in terms of making a living*”.

It has been indicated in previous paragraphs that the school was situated in a “*poorly developed area*” about which the Principal says: “*... the rate of crime is very high. ... The rate of unemployment is high.*” The Deputy Principal added that: “*... some of these kids come from very poor backgrounds*”. In addition to this the Business Economics educator expressed this view: “*Going back to the impoverished background of the learners, you find that they have no books – the basic things – no uniform. It may happen that there is really no money to buy it*”. The HOD Languages seemed to be emphasizing the extent of the need for poverty relief when he said: “*Most of the learners cannot afford to stay at school for an extended period of time. They need to find jobs because families out there need to be supported, other learners are self-supporting*”. Given the circumstances described above, it is worth mentioning Msutwana's recent research findings. She claims that the learners' psychological well-being and learning are influenced by poverty. She adds that many learners come from deprived homes and become caught up in a vicious circle of demotivation and non-success in life (2004:113).

In spite of the evident improvement in material conditions of life over time, Everatt (undated) argues that the lives of black youth in South Africa have been and continue to be dominated by poverty, which is also the case with the learners in this study. In such circumstances, research has shown, education is a clearly identified path from poverty (Everatt, undated). This is also affirmed by what the Deputy Principal says: “*Then also the poverty level because some of these kids come from very poor backgrounds, man, and they just want to move up the social ladder and for them the*

only way out is to study after school, just to escape the poverty and just go up the social ladder”.

Louw, Edwards and Orr (2001:67-68) identified a system by which barriers to learning and development are categorised according to circles such as individual, environmental circle, family circle, peer group circle, school circle, community circle and society circle. Lack of basic needs and poverty are categorised as coming from the family circle; a lack of facilities and resources and inadequate teaching are categorised as stemming from the school circle, whereas a lack of resources and funding, a lack of educational support services, drug abuse and crime are barriers coming from the community circle. The evident lack of basic needs such as books and other facilities and resources, funding, prevalent crime and drug abuse are a potentially limiting factors.

4.8 The Parents’ Perspective

Parents often have an influence on the decisions made by their children. Parents can play a supportive role in decisions made by their children to pursue further studies. They can support their children to pursue higher education in a variety of ways, such as providing materially and financially for education; giving support, love, and encouragement and evincing belief in their children. However, the decisions of the learners to pursue higher education can be limited by the parents’ lack of information about higher education given their own level of education, lack of provisioning for their children’s education, and lack of emotional support for their children.

4.8.1 Why parents thought their children aspired to higher education

The main responses ranged from wanting to improve conditions at home, progressing in life, to having a good job and earning money.

4.8.2 Reading materials provided since the children were small

It was obvious that parents did not provide any reading materials for their children neither were they aware of the sort of books that their children read except for the Bible, and “*books provided at school*”. Children had either read books provided for them at school, newspapers or magazines.

With regard to parents’ provision and taking responsibility for their children’s education, it is common practice in some cultures to read to young children. The belief that young children should be read to is popular even within the professional educational community (Teale 1984). Wells (1985) believes that both the rich language of stories and the sort of talk that arises from stories prepares the child to cope with the style of teaching and assessing that is so frequently observed in schools. Panofsky argues that it is not enough to say that reading to children is a key to literacy because not all children who are “read” to at home do well in literacy instruction. I would like to believe that the opposite is also true that not all children who are “not read to” do badly at school. Research undertaken among the youth in Grahamstown East revealed that in spite of the generally depressed economic situation, the youth who have had a head start in personal development owing to their family and educational background, were able to identify what might be the most effective means to develop their potential.

Linked to providing financially for their children’s education, is the material provision for education, which is known as the head start. With regard to the practice of reading or reading materials provided, parents do not seem to have provided reading materials or to have engaged in any school-like practices with their children while the children were younger. This surfaces in the interviews when they were asked about the reading material that they had provided to their children when they were small. Parents did not have information about the sort of books their children read. They could only identify the Bible, novels supplied at school, magazines and newspapers.

There are parallels here with Niven’s findings in her study of reading practices among a group of History I foundation year students at Rhodes University. Niven (2003:114) found that her research participants’ prior reading practices suggested that during their

childhood, there was little time or opportunity for extensive, enjoyable reading either at home or at school. They had limited access to libraries, newspapers, magazines or printed children's literature – they generally lived in 'print-poor' environments. Further, she concludes, parents usually saw the teaching of reading as the exclusive responsibility of teachers. They were not involved in the literacy development of their children because reading was mostly understood as a church-or school-related activity. In the participants' homes it did not stand out as a shared activity in which meanings were imparted and negotiated (Thorne in Lantolf 200:236)

Amaya's aunt: *Some books, I don't know really.*

Chosen's mother: *Books, he has excellent writing skills and always visits the library.*

Devante's father: *Books supplied at school, novels and newspapers.*

Glen's aunt: *He read siblings' books here at home.*

King's mother: *There are books that he reads in his caravan.*

Lindie's mother: *She likes reading. We bought her magazines.*

Reebo's mother: *He likes magazines. He likes the Bible.*

Weja's mother: *Newspapers and other books.*

4.8.3 What parents thought they, the family and the community needed to do to support learners aspiring to higher education

Parents mentioned basic provision of food and clothing, saving money for education from as early as possible, encouraging and motivating the child not to lose hope.

4.8.4 Where parents saw their children in 5-10 years time

All the parents saw their children as having successfully finished their studies and having careers and a bright future (See Appendix 6).

4.8.5 Provision and responsibility for children's education

From the data, it was obvious that parents had not made any provision for their children's education due to lack of money. This is evident from what the parents said in response to a question about what provision had been made for their children's tertiary studies.

Amaya's aunt: *"None, because we don't want to reach any conclusion and get disappointed later if money is not available. His uncle is unemployed. There is nothing prepared for him".*

Chosen's mother: *As a pensioner it is not easy to save money. His sister is the one who contributes towards his education. I depend on her. She has applied for a bursary on his behalf.*

Weja's mother: *I haven't made preparations yet. I've spoken to her uncle who works at the Municipality about a bursary that is offered there. He is assisting us.*

Lindie's mother: *We are poor people from the farm, we were not able to prepare anything.*

Reebo's mother: *I had started saving money in the bank but his brother passed away so I had to use that money for funeral costs. I'll start saving again.*

Apart from not having made provision for their children's education, parents did not seem to take responsibility for their children's education on a day-to-day basis. This was reflected when educators said the following about the parents:

Business Economics Educator: *... you find that parents are passive, they are not involved in school activities, and they don't attend parents' meetings from when their child is in grade 8 to when they are in grade 12. Never heard what their reasons are or even get a report and it ends there, there is no follow-up so we don't know anything about a learner's home, we're just teaching, you see.*

Accounting Educator: *... you find that most of the time parents do not back up their children. So if parents can keep up with their children's work, ask teachers if there are any problems, offer help, things can be easier.*

Business Economics Educator: *There have been activities, we even tried to involve parents, calling them along to show them progress and problems. Parents do not usually come. Some are at work though it's 6 o'clock in the evening so we don't know what their problem is. Parents don't listen, sometimes the situation just stays the same.*

Maths Educator: *Parents need to realize that they have to take responsibility for their children.*

HOD Humanities: *It's difficult to get hold of a learner's parent to discuss the progress of their child. In fact, it takes 1 to 3 months for a parent to come.*

4.8.6 Parental support, love and encouragement

Parental support, love and encouragement came up as a factor that can positively influence the learners' decisions to pursue higher education. Lack thereof was criticized by educators and some SMT members. Although they were not explicit, learners seemed to yearn for parental support as none of them reported getting

sufficient support from their parents. Learners had this to say about parental support, love and encouragement:

Chosen: Parents should take the initiative of teaching their children. The way they act makes or breaks our confidence. They should be our source of inspiration and the strength we hold onto.

Glen: They should provide all the necessary support: emotional, financial and otherwise.

Lizzie: Parents and family must give their children support.

Shellow: They should give ... courage and make sure they give support, advice and consider learners as the ones who want to achieve.

Lindie: Parents ... should play a good role, they should offer support.

When parents were asked what they thought they should do to support their children who wanted higher education studies, they gave varied responses that reflected a limited view of the kind of support needed by learners for educational success. This support seemed to be focused on meeting basic needs. Due to the parents' socio-economic status, there was no mention of accessing funding through investments or bank loans.

Chosen's mother: Save money from as early as possible and instil perseverance.

Glen's aunt: Encourage them not to lose hope.

Reebo's mother: Start a project, raise funds, and pay fees.

Weja's mother: Form an association, sell crafts, and meet our children's needs.

Devante's father: Encourage, motivate

Amaya's aunt: Provide clothing and food, help whenever they need anything.

The actual support given to the children by parents to ensure their success seemed to focus more on emotional support such as love and encouragement (see Appendix 8). It was Chosen's mother who mentioned other things such as encouraging him to "*communicate, to be practical, we provide information about careers, access to funding and job opportunities*". Chosen was the only one of the research participants who had siblings with higher education qualifications.

Parental support, love and encouragement proved successful in Whalley's study where parents who

demonstrated a deep commitment to supporting and nurturing their children, ... had shown ... that it was possible for parents who had everything stacked against them in terms of socio-economic status, lack of educational achievement

and low levels of family support to become very effective advocates for their children (Whalley 2001:26).

To sum up, it is clear that the support given by parents is limited and seems to provide for basic or deficiency (lower-order) needs rather than intellectual or self actualisation (higher-order) needs

4.8.7 Educators and School Management Team on parental involvement and lack thereof

While parents viewed their support as to “*encourage*”, “*provide*”, “*love*”, the SMT and educators on various occasions gave a somewhat different picture of parental support at the school.

Accounting Educator: ... *you find that most of the time parents do not back up their children.*

Business Economics Educator: *A child from a very early age should be sure of their family support, wherever they go. Parents are passive, they are not involved in school activities, they don't attend parents' meetings from when their child is in grade 8 to when they are in grade 12 ... and it ends there, there is no follow-up*

Maths Educator: *Parents need to realize that they have to take responsibility for their children.*

HOD Humanities: ... *parents can supervise the work of the learners and encourage them to study, encourage them to go to extra classes that are organised for them. ... it is difficult to get hold of a learner's parent to discuss the progress of their child.*

HOD Maths & Science: *Family is the one which should be constantly telling the student: education is important, you have to work, if you don't you won't get that. If that is not coming from the family no matter how much the Department and other people can try to push, the effect will be minimal.*

To link with the parent's apparent lack of involvement, as identified by the educators, I refer to Louw, Edwards and Orr (2001) who state that the parent, guardian or caregiver is the primary educator of the learner and the school is the secondary educator. This view seems to be affirmed by some of educator-participants as illustrated above. Louw, Edwards and Orr argue that the parents and the school form part of a larger school community, which surrounds the school and should support it in every possible way. Arnold (cited in Whalley 2000:58) recognises that parents are still viewed as ‘helpers’ rather than as ‘equal and active partners’ engaged in the process of education. She argues that unless the contribution made by parents is truly

valued parents will continue to take on this less powerful role (referred to in interviews with educators and SMT above). Furthermore, she claims, if parents are listened to, then their children receive the powerful message that their family, its culture and values are worth something in the world (Whalley 2000:58).

Learners can only be cared for effectively if the school, parents and other major role-players in the community form a partnership, establish a network, join forces, in other words, do everything possible to ensure that each learner in the school develops normally and is educated according to her or his ability. In some communities, there are already well-structured community-based support systems, but, in other communities, the school may have to take the initiative to establish such a system. Grahamstown has existing governmental and non-governmental community-based support systems that the school can access.

Louw, Edwards and Orr (2001) make the point that even though the parents are the primary educators and have to take responsibility for their children, many parents are not prepared for parenthood and cry out for help. Further, they believe that the principal and educators are professional people and can assist parents with basic parenting skills; that educators who are trained in Life Skills will be able to guide parents regarding the education of their children. Furthermore, they make the point that in order for parents to support learners, parents will have to be acknowledged, assisted and incorporated into the partnership. Parents will respond positively to the school if they feel that they are respected and are assured that the principal and educators care for the learners and want to do what is best for them. Finally, Louw, Edwards and Orr maintain, it requires a lot of creativity and enthusiasm to get parents to attend a meeting at school. Parents need to feel welcome at the school and the tone of the invitation should be friendly and the school should be sensitive to the fact that many parents are illiterate (2001:87-88).

One of the SMT members was interviewed in the local newspaper about the school's grade 12s and their future careers. He linked career choice to parental involvement rather than to guidance from the school. His views are indicated in the following extract from the newspaper article:

“The problem is, in all black schools, children only start thinking about careers in grade 12 and that’s too late. In grade 10 they have to choose subjects and we try to involve parents, but, out of a school of about 500 pupils, only eight parents came to the meeting we held this year”.

Mr S. believes that insufficient involvement from parents results in learners being ill-equipped for making career decisions.

“It’s not negligence on the parents’ part, it’s a lack of knowledge. They entrust their kids entirely to the school. Most are poor and work long hours, they aren’t there to give their kids good advice” (Grocott’s Mail, 22 October 2004).

4.9 The Educators’ Perspective

From interviewing the educators, one can discern the following factors that can influence the decisions of grade 12 learners to enter higher education: intrinsic motivation; educators’ encouragement and guidance; motivational talks and excursions, as well as partnership with a former model C school. A major limiting factor, other than those already mentioned in previous sections, was lack of career guidance and counselling.

4.9.1 Motivation

Educators’ views were that to succeed in higher education learners needed intrinsic motivation.

Business Economics Educator: *Firstly, they need motivation because they lack motivation.*

Maths Educator: *If intrinsically motivated they’ll carry on smoothly, ...*

Principal: *Intrinsic motivation, finance, family support, work ethic, sacrifice and prioritising.*

The basic meaning of the word motivation is action (Eccles & Wigfield 2002:110). It is derived from the Latin word *movere*, which literally means “to move”. This implies in other words, moving from one point to the next. Hence Hamachek (195:275) sees motivation as the “go” of the personality.

Ford, in Eccles and Wigfield (2002:116), sees motivation as the product of goals, emotions and personal beliefs. It is a driving force, a desire or an urge that causes an individual to engage in certain behaviour (Mwamwenda 1996:259). Similarly,

Colman (2001:464) defines motivation as a driving force or forces responsible for the initiation, persistence, direction and vigour of goal-directed behaviour.

4.9.1.1 Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the desire to perform activities because they are rewarding in and of themselves (Baron 1995:396). This kind of motivation is associated with activities that are their own reward (Woolfolk 1993:337). It is fuelled by one's goals or ambitions (Hamachek 1995:278) and is self-starting, self-perpetuating and requires only an inward interest. When learners are intrinsically motivated, they engage in an activity because they enjoy the subject and desire to learn it, irrespective of the praise won or grades earned (Hamachek 1995:278). Morgan (1993:32) describes intrinsically motivated learners as those who are concerned with the broadening aspects of learning and see it as a means of changing their circumstances.

There is evidence of intrinsic motivation among the research participants which is indicated by statements such as: "spend my energy investing in my education". ... The hunger I have for knowledge and success (Chosen); "I will turn the limitations into challenges" (Reebo); "Every hard worker always produces good results".

4.9.2 Educators' encouragement and guidance

What the educators and the SMT said they were doing to prepare learners for higher education was to encourage and guide them in their own subjects. Like parents, educators said they used encouragement and guidance to prepare learners for higher education and in that way contributed to motivating and encouraging them to pursue higher education.

Business Economics Educator: *I motivate them and tell them what life entails.*

Maths Educator: *... I encourage them to study and succeed.*

Home Economics Educator: *I guide them into seeing that Home Economics is a subject can take them far if they want to pursue it beyond matric.*

Business Economics Educator: *I do have an influence, I must have an influence, I encourage them.*

HOD Humanities: *I guide them because every teacher is a guidance teacher, encourage them to study.*

Deputy Principal: *Guidance from teachers, it's imperative, that's probably most fundamental.*

Principal: *We encourage learners who want assistance to come forward so that they can get the support that is needed. ... These are attempts to encourage them and ensure that they do succeed.*

Kruger (1998, cited in Louw Edwards & Orr 2001:64) writes: “*Never, never, give up on a learner ... she or he may be the next president*”. One might feel discouraged to encourage and motivate learners such as the ones at Phaphamani to do their best to try to develop their potential, given their disadvantaged and impoverished backgrounds, and their demotivated state. However, despite the learners’ evident lack of commitment and interest in what the school has attempted to do to support them, it is generally expected of educators to encourage, motivate, stimulate and take an interest in learners. It is important that learners are encouraged and motivated to participate in school activities and to succeed at school as this could enhance their self-esteem and give meaning to their lives, particularly in situations or circumstances that are very difficult, negative or appear to be hopeless. In short, it seems educators’ encouragement and guidance can influence learners positively in deciding to further their education.

4.9.3 Motivational talks and excursions

One gathers from the educators and SMT member’ interviews that motivational talks and excursions were used to prepare learners for higher education and to expose them to careers and related information. These were used as learner support tools or special programmes for those learners wanting to further their education. Athey (1990 cited in Whalley 2001:142) emphasizes the importance of widening childrens’ experiences beyond the school walls to feed their schemas and to generate new learning. Greenfield (1997:122) also reflects the same view when she writes: “experience is a key factor in shaping the micro-circuiting of the brain”. In other words, children’s experiences and exposure outside the classroom situation stimulates their learning.

The learner motivation programme appears in the school’s Matric Results Improvement Plan of 2002 (Appendix 11). When they were asked what they saw as

the role of the school in preparing learners for higher education, educators commented:

Accounting Educator: *The school this year has tried to have motivational talks,... , speakers were invited, educational excursions were organised and different careers were discussed.*

Maths Educator: *The school does motivational talks and even invites role models from outside, sometimes even former learners who have been successful.*

Business Economics Educator: *They had motivational talks and so on, we also invited a priest just before exams for a prayer service.*

HOD Humanities: *We have organised outings where we invited people within education who encouraged them to study. Some of them were able to show learners different careers that they can follow after they pass.*

The motivational talks and excursions seemed to have been used as a window through which the grade 12 learners could look to get exposure to the world of careers and other possibilities out there because the Deputy Principal said that “*kids are ignorant as to what is out there, what is possible and what is not possible for them. They are like trapped in a small world. They only know what’s going on out there and sometimes it’s ignorance or just lack of career guidance on the part of teachers or parents cause most parents are not qualified parents or professionals*”.

4.9.4 Forging partnership with a former model C school.

Forging a partnership with a local former model C school, Graeme College, was seen by educators and SMT members as a learner support programme to help prepare learners for higher education. This strategy, however, was not successful (Section 5.5.1).

Although, the educators and the SMT used this partnership as a learner support activity, it was clear that it did not succeed. There was clear evidence of discouragement and disappointment on the part of educators. The Home Economics educator said “*we are also discouraged as organisers, ... we make the effort to improve results, but they don’t appreciate what we are doing. It’s disappointing when they don’t see the efforts we make.* I observed a feeling of relief on the educator’s face when she reported: *... we found that the committed students like Lindie were the ones who attended and those students are a sure pass. They are the*

people who responded positively even though it was raining, the rest were not there. It is worth noting, however, that the lack of interest in the Graeme College partnership among the majority of the grade 12 learners did not necessarily dampen the spirit of the educators. This was evident in what the Home Economics educator said: *“We still want to do it next year because we believe that the students we have this year won’t be the same as students we’ll have next year. Maybe next year they’ll see the purpose of what we are doing”.*

To take the idea of forging partnership with other institutions further, I cite Louw, Edwards and Orr (2001:95), who argue that it unrealistic to think that the school alone can address all the problems surrounding learners or that the necessary support can not be brought in from elsewhere. They state that according to the report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services (1998), the notion of the centre-of-learning (school) or community-based support was acknowledgement that the skills and expertise found within a community must be discovered, nurtured and developed. This would make it possible for the school to be assisted by a wide variety of expertise. In my view, the motivational talks, excursions and partnerships forged seem to be strategies for seeking community support for learners and of exposing them to possibilities out there, through a wide variety of expertise. Perhaps if the partnership had been forged with a successful school in the same community first, the learners would have responded differently. The poor attendance of the learners on the Graeme College visit was seen by teachers as a lack of commitment on the part of the learners, rather than as something structural and socio-historical. In other words, it was not seen as a possible inability of the learners to identify with and participate in the social context in which the learners would have found themselves had they gone to Graeme College. Participation is a central idea in socio-cultural understandings of learning. The general non-participation of learners in the twinning effort with Graeme College can also be Viewed from another perspective which I discuss I discuss in the following paragraph.

The fact that the twinning effort with an affluent school in town had failed can be linked to Bourdieu’s (1977) concern with education’s role in cultural reproduction. Bourdieu argues that schools transmit certain forms of culture and, in a way,

reproduce not only that culture, but also its social class structure. Bourdieu maintains that middle class pupils already have access to certain cultural codes while working class pupils do not because of the differences in everyday social practices. Bourdieu, through this notion of symbolic violence, argues that schooling essentially functions to legitimise and re-inforce the disadvantages of learners. Working class children find their home culture devalued and disconfirmed, while the dominant culture presents itself as natural. Possibly, the disinclination of the majority of the learners to “interact with Graemians”, “seek assistance” and “go and mingle” “to observe” at Graeme College, which had been perceived to present itself as a natural setting from which the Phaphamani working class learners can “learn” the culture of classroom interaction reflected how they “resisted” the idea of their “culture” (school and home) being devalued and disconfirmed for a new one.

This analogy could help explain the learners’ attitudes or even feelings towards the Graeme partnership. Possibly, feelings of inferiority or even fear of interacting with learners who are “different from us” could have been the issue. Individuals’ identities, according to Norton (2000), must be understood in relation to the larger social structures in which they live. The issue of power, or access to resources within these social structures, is therefore an important factor in determining which identities are available to individuals and also which are valued. In support of this view McKenna (2003:186) argues that learners are not always free to engage with the environment (their texts, fellow students and so on) in whichever ways they choose, because they are constrained by power imbalances, available discourses and shifting notions of their own multiple identities.

4.10 Limiting Factors

Although there are factors, gleaned from the educators’ interview data, that can influence grade 12 learners to pursue higher education there are also factors that they mention that can influence learners negatively against pursuing higher education. These are factors such as lack of career guidance and counselling, lack of finance, lack of motivation and commitment on the part of the learners, lack of funds and resources at the school, lack of study skills and inappropriate subject choice, lack of

support from the Principal, parents and family. Most of the above factors have already been dealt with in previous sections of the chapter. In this section the focus will be on lack of career guidance and counselling.

4.10.1 Lack of Career Guidance and Counselling

It is evident from the data that there is a lack of career guidance when the Deputy Principal, HOD Maths & Science and Accounting educator say:

Deputy Principal: There is no career guidance, kids are ignorant as to what is out there, what is possible and what is not possible for them. They are like, trapped in a small world. They only know what is going on around them. They don't actually know what's going on out there and sometimes it's ignorance or just lack of career guidance on the part of teachers or parents cause most of the parents are not qualified parents or professionals.

Kids do not know what entrance requirements are for universities, technikons, colleges and so forth. They do not know whether these institutions are offering bursaries, ... I think we should start there – career guidance, it's one of the major periods. If each class can have a guidance period, that would be great, man, I mean, it would help a lot.

Teachers are also ignorant, teachers don't know about these things. I think teachers should be workshopped around the whole issue of career guidance because you find that most teachers or some of the teachers have studied at colleges, others at technikons and universities, so their perception of what's out there is different. One should try and get all of them on board and the only way to do that is by organising a proper workshop where people would come in and workshop teachers on study skills and careers out there so they can impart the skills to the learners.

HOD Maths & Science: They don't get guidance, they don't know what subject is good for them, and they just do subjects without thinking about what they really get in the end. They don't have a goal.

HOD Humanities: They also need vocational guidance in terms of choosing career paths.

Accounting Educator: They need career guidance very, very seriously. What lacks tremendously is guidance, they need guidance.

Home Economics Educator: They need to have the right combination of subjects in order to pursue the field they want.

A 2004 grade 12 learner at Phaphamani (who was not part of this study) was interviewed by a Grocott's Mail journalist about her plans for the future, and asked if she has a career guidance teacher at school to help her plan for her future career. Her reply was “No, there is **no career counselling** centre, nor a section of the school library offering information of this kind at Phaphamani, some teachers you can talk to

*about it, but they **don't always know** so they can't help. Lots of us have asked"* [emphasis mine] (Dewing 2004).

Lack of career guidance and counselling at the school impacts severely on the learners. Lack of career guidance and counselling at the school should not have occurred, as my position was that of Head of Department: Guidance and Counselling. Over the years, I attended a countless number of meetings, workshops and training sessions in Grahamstown, East London and Port Elizabeth, organised by the Department of Education on what Guidance specialists should be doing at their schools, the allocation of Guidance periods in the school time-table and so forth, but whenever I reported back to the Principal I was ignored. In November 2001, I took the matter up with the local District Manager and Education Development Officer in the Department of Education, but felt so ridiculed when they told me that to have a full-time Guidance specialist was something that happened in former model C schools and not in township schools as the mindsets in the type of school like Phaphamani had not changed to accommodate my proposal. Besides, they added, Guidance was a non-examinable subject. I felt disappointed and alarmed by their response and their lack of support. Furthermore, in a personal conversation (on 10.09.04) with a former educator at the school Mrs M., I learnt that comments had been made behind the scenes by a number of educators that my proposal to be allowed to focus on Guidance only at the school as my position designated were that Phaphamani was "not a white school", "this is not overseas". Such comments clearly illustrate how limited the thinking of some educators is and how their own experiences of not having had Guidance at school makes them unable to see its value. In a way, they were inadvertently reproducing the culture of their own schooling experiences. It is however, heart-warming, to share that in 1999 and 2000, I managed, amid criticism and lack of support from colleagues, to organise very successfully the school's first and second Careers Days, drawing a wide range of academic and non-academic professionals from Rhodes University, local schools, government departments in town, and from the community. Evidence that learners benefited from this initiative is reflected in Section 4.6.2.

4.11 SMT's Perspective

The decisions of grade 12 learners to pursue higher education can be supported by the SMT's initiatives in imparting academic skills; establishing a viable guidance policy for the school; improving and strengthening existing learner support programmes; increasing the number of learners who qualify to enter HE; mobilising the learners for HE and keeping the available pool of grade 12 learners motivated.

4.11.1 SMT's awareness about learners wanting to enter HE

Box 15

SMT's awareness about learners wanting to enter HE

Principal:	Firstly, we become aware when a child brings application forms from the institution or in the course of the year a child may talk to you expressing to you that he or she has an interest and then you become aware.
HOD Humanities:	A few of them avail themselves for discussion about what they want ... a few of them. You find that many of them just keep quiet and that shows they do not know what they are going to do next year if they pass.
HOD Languages:	On a person-to-person basis, when you talk to a person, but you really don't find such enthusiasm about higher education from the learners.

The SMT become aware of “*a few*” grade 12 learners applying to higher education institutions during the course of the year and that seems to create a need or rather an opportunity for the school to make every effort to supply as much information as possible to all learners, not necessarily only grade 12 learners, about higher education and various career opportunities available to them. This view was expressed by the Deputy Principal when he said , “*If I could reach all the kids I would be happy but it's*

not possible. By the time I get them they're in grade 12". Although I am not making a recommendation, on the basis of this view, I believe that this can be part of the school's Life Orientation programme from grade 8 onwards, so that by the time learners reach grade 12, they will have gathered ample information to help them decide what to study, where to study, the entrance requirements, how to access funds and so forth. Such a programme, in my view, needs to include, not only subject educators, but parents as well.

4.11.2 Imparting academic skills

Imparting the appropriate academic skills to learners can make them feel confident and enthusiastic about furthering their studies. Not all SMT members were able to give exact details about academic skills they imparted to the learners in their respective subjects. One would have expected them to mention skills such as reading, comprehension, summarising, essay-writing and how to tackle different types of questions such as multiple choice, short questions and long questions, because these are common in grade 12 examinations in all subjects. Further, it emerged when research participants were asked what the school should do to support learners wanting HE. Tia said: *"The school should guide learners in study skills"*. King said: *"The school should provide exam skills"*.

The Principal and the HOD Languages were evasive in their responses with regard to what they did in their subjects to prepare learners for higher education:

Principal: *There is what they call a hidden curriculum. I believe that if, for example, I work hard, I am punctual, I honour periods, without having to say it to learners, somehow it will rub off into what I want to achieve.*

HOD Languages: *We are talking about establishing a relationship with former model C schools. We also want to twin classes, have another teacher from 1st or 2nd language to come and teach here. So those are other things that I said still need to be done, but we have not done them yet.*

The inability to articulate precisely what academic skills they imparted to learners seems to demonstrate the SMT's lack of capacity to empower learners when it comes to study skills. On the basis of these responses I would like to assume that in a way,

they seem to be reproducing their own schooling experience, which is likely not to have focused on study skills.

The others, such as the HOD Maths & Science and HOD Humanities believed that they had been doing a lot. From what they said, it seems they used teacher-tell methods rather than engaging learners in practical exercises.

HOD Humanities: *There's a lot I'm doing. I usually begin by talking to them about the importance of education nowadays before I deal with study materials. I guide them because every teacher is a guidance teacher, I encourage them to study.*

HOD Maths & Science: *What I do every time, especially in the beginning of the year, is to give them advice as a subject teacher, tell them the technique of learning and, what they are going to achieve if they learn.*

More explicit guidance was offered by the Deputy Principal who was able to describe (although not in-depth) what he did, with career guidance, study skills, and planning to prepare learners for higher education.

Deputy Principal: *I do a lot. I buy newspapers on a weekly basis, show them careers out there and show them addresses of technikons, varsities; show them role models from newspapers, people coming from poor backgrounds. I teach them study skills, how to organise themselves. I know that the ones that come from me are basically prepared. Most of the students that were in my classes before, they all studied further and qualified.*

There seems to be correspondence between what members of the SMT do in imparting academic skills and their level of enthusiasm about the learners and higher education. The principal and the HOD Languages on many occasions seemed hesitant, pessimistic and sceptical about encouraging learners to take on higher education studies, citing the visibly high rate of unemployed graduates, some of whom were siblings to the research participants (see Section 4.7.5). Interestingly, they are the ones who did not seem able to describe the academic skills they imparted to learners in their own subjects.

The deputy principal, on the other hand, had on several occasions seemed enthusiastic, supportive and embraced the idea of learners aiming to pursue higher education, and of keeping them motivated and of increasing the numbers of learners who aspire to enter HE. (see Sections 4.11.1; 4.11.5 and 4.11.6).

4.11.3 Establishing a Guidance Policy and Programme at the school

When learners were asked what they thought the school should do to support learners who wanted to pursue higher education, it became clear that they needed guidance. Their responses were remarkably similar:

Lindie: *They should ... support them by guiding them so that learners know what they can study the following year.*

Tia: *The school should guide learners in study skills.*

Shellow: *Give information on higher education and support learners all the way.*

King: *The school should provide exam skills.*

Shadow: *The school should provide the learners with a Guidance teacher so that grade 12s know exactly what they are about to get into.*

Glen: *The school should provide career counselling and guidance to learners.*

Lizzie: *Give information to learners about what they can do to go further to higher education.*

Chosen: *Motivational speakers, career choices, decision-making workshops should be introduced early.*

Shadow: *The school should provide grade 12 learners with support and help so that the learners know exactly what careers they should pursue in life and what the requirements are.*

It is evident from the above statements that learners at the school are not only in dire need of study skills, but the provision of career guidance and counselling can be of tremendous help to learners when they have to decide about their future careers. This evidence seems to suggest a need for the SMT to attend to establishing guidance at the school as a matter of urgency, as was expressed by the Accounting educator when she said: “ ... *they need career guidance very, very seriously*”. This can possibly strengthen the quality of learner support and consequently improve their grade 12 pass rate, thus increasing the number of learners qualifying for higher education.

4.11.4 Improving and strengthening existing learner support programmes and other special programmes

From the interview data, it is evident that several attempts had been made by the school to inform, encourage and involve learners in and expose them to different activities and programmes within and outside the school to make them aware of opportunities, possibilities open to them and life out there, after grade 12. This is evident in the statements made by members of the SMT below:

Principal: *We invited people from NGOs to give talks. Last year we invited Mrs H. to address them about what is expected in higher education, what Gadra looks at for a learner to qualify for a bursary. These are attempts to encourage them and ensure that they do succeed. There is also a programme run by Synergy on study skills, decision-making and leadership skills.*

Deputy Principal: *... people coming in from technikons, Saturday classes conducted by the Department, winter school, and spring school. We assist them, like right now I'm busy with Gadra bursary forms.*

H.O.D. Humanities: *There are skills ... offered by students from Rhodes University: study skills, media skills and financial management skills. We found that learners were very, very interested. We have organised outings ... invited people within education who encouraged them to study. Some ... were able to show learners different careers that they can follow.*

HOD Languages: *I'm in charge of the Media and Debating Clubs. ... We talk about improving the language ... look at confidence, as well as the willingness to speak the language. It is helping them ... they feel confident to stand up and argue a point in English, learning through trial and error, learning by practice. An opportunity is given to make mistakes and learn.*

From the data, one gathers that these programmes had not been effective. Educators thought that learners were either not interested in these programmes or they were not committed to their studies. Given the evidence it is also possible that the timing of these programmes may have contributed to the learners' poor or participation in these programmes. Educators felt manipulated, disappointed, helpless and indignant at the learners' disinclination for the learner support programmes provided for them. They were very descriptive in expressing dissatisfaction:

Business Economics Educator: *Sometimes you stay, but they don't come, as a result you get used to them not staying after school, they make you feel that you don't need extra classes with them because they don't stay anyway.*

Home Economics Educator: *During holidays extra classes were arranged for them, but still only those who are sure matric exemptions attended. Others were not there. We had classes of four, four learners here during holidays. It's disappointing when they don't see the efforts we make.*

Maths Educator: *We sacrifice our time for them in extra classes and Saturday classes, but in a class of 30, only 5 would come, and if that 5 comes today, tomorrow one or two would be absent and a new one who was absent the previous day would come along. So that is what they do. There would be one or two individuals who are committed.*

There were extra classes run during winter school and we couldn't get them for our own extra classes and we found that they did not really attend the winter school, neither did they come to us for extra classes. During exams they want extra classes for revision, during revision you find that they know very little or nothing. When you ask the reason, they say they did not understand the tutor at winter school but they carry on and don't indicate to the tutor that they don't understand. After school they

don't want to stay because they say they are going to other classes, when those classes are over they want to come back for extra classes here. That, I don't understand. I was surprised when they hardly remembered the grade 11 work although it was revised during winter school.

When as an educator you are willing to spend extra time with them after school or on Saturday, they put pressure on you to stop it. They tell you that an hour is enough on Saturday because they are rushing either for shopping or for a funeral. There is a huge lack of commitment on their side. For instance, I have a group of learners that I teach Maths at home this weekend. One of them is not coming because she is attending a ceremonial rite of a relative. If she was committed to her studies she would not attend that ceremonial rite, not at this crucial exam time, because one writes matric exams once. So there is no commitment from the learners whatsoever. They don't seem to know what to do in order to succeed. Theoretically, they want to pass, but practically they don't commit themselves. To be successful you have to be practical.

The existing learner support and special programmes seem to offer a variety of valuable and worthwhile information; opportunities; academic, business and lifeskills that learners will find useful throughout their lives. Having said that, I wish to argue that, in my view, these programmes need to be well-planned, organised, co-ordinated, monitored and evaluated in order to improve and strengthen them so that they attract learners.

4.11.5 Increasing the number of learners who enter higher education: the school's success

There is evidence that “a few” learners have “*actually gone to institutions of higher learning*”, “*progressed well after matric*”, “*studied and qualified*”. Further evidence shows that these learners “*are doing well*”, “*are coping*” “*are qualified and working*”. I would like to link this measure of success to quality-of-life research findings that education is considered to be a means-to-an-end for young people in so far as it provides a passport to jobs and facilitates social mobility (Moller *et al.* 1991; Moller 1991a). The learners' achievements partly contradict critical theory's claim that working class children are predisposed by their socialization to enter manual occupations in that with qualities such as determination, bravery and personal triumph in the face of poverty, one can rise above such a predisposition through education (see Section 2.4.3.3).

Although not explicitly, the idea of increasing the numbers of is also embedded in the school's mission and vision statements in phrases like "availing opportunities for full realization of potential", "constantly unearthing, nurturing and developing talent". In the light of the above, I would like to argue that if the SMT is seen to be committed to increasing its learner supply to higher education, the decisions of learners to enter higher education are likely to be influenced in a positive manner. Hence, my suggestion that the pass rate needs to be looked into and improved, so that more learners can qualify to enter HE.

4.11.6 Keeping the available pool of grade 12s motivated to study further

Keeping the available pool of grade 12 learners motivated to go for further studies at universities and technikons can influence their decisions to study in higher education institutions. However, the SMT did not seem to know how to get through to the available pool of learners, but realised that keeping the latter motivated required teamwork. The visibly high rate of unemployed graduates in Grahamstown East seemed to have made it even more difficult for some SMT member to motivate learners to aspire to higher education. The different views, feelings, and lack of clarity as to what can be done is evident in the following statements:

Deputy Principal: *It's the responsibility of the entire staff. That's the only way we can get these kids motivated.*

HOD Humanities: *They need to be made aware that life out there is difficult and one should take responsibility in order to survive. They should be encouraged to study, to do what is expected of them and to refrain from things that could jeopardise their future.*

HOD Maths & Science: *Time and again you just say things, but there's no effect coming out of it. It's frustrating sometimes, they don't see it.*

HOD Languages: *... disillusioned, they are demotivated. You'll find that there are people who are having better qualifications, their own brothers and sisters, ... who are still not able to find jobs.*

Principal: *...With the current situation in the institution because he'll simply refer to a sibling who is qualified but jobless. We live in an environment where people like to enjoy themselves more than working. So I think the school has a big duty of assisting learners in prioritising, in performing well, in getting financial assistance and so on. The school has a task to make them aware that things do not come easily. I like what one educationist said, that: 'the root of education is bitter but the fruit is sweet'. They must not look at easy ways, short cuts and so on. I think if these are attended to that will be a big boost for them.*

Different members of the SMT seemed to have different feelings and different views about keeping the grade 12s motivated for further studies. The HOD Maths & Sciences expressed frustration about not being able to get through to the learners. The Principal and the HOD Humanities seemed to favour warning learners about how difficult life was out there and how the learners could be assisted to prioritise. The Principal shared another view with the HOD Languages, which reflected hesitation and scepticism about encouraging learners to enter higher education, due to the prevalent high rate of unemployment of graduates some of whom are siblings to the learners.

A recent change of policy by the South African government could also discourage stakeholders in education from encouraging grade 12 learners in disadvantaged communities to pursue higher education. The National Department of Education is aiming to limit the number of students enrolling at tertiary institutions because the government is “wasting R6 billion annually on dropouts” and that universities might be enrolling students in fields that the government does not consider as priorities (Kamaldien 2004). This is in contrast with the policy of the past 10 years, which was to increase student participation in higher education, particularly the 18 to 24 year age group (South Africa 2001). The state is now saying that this should be reduced because they cannot afford to fund it. This change in policy means that there will be students who are inadequately financed and who are not prepared for university (Kamaldien 2004). A comment by a spokesperson for the South African Students Congress was that *“These policies will not help black communities where many people are in need of higher education. In townships you will find less than 10 people getting a tertiary education. ... It will disadvantage people who are from poor backgrounds”* (Kamaldien 2004:2)

4.11.7 Mobilizing learners for higher education

The educators thought that the idea of mass mobilization⁷ of grade 12 learners for higher education was possible, but was largely dependent on “*the school and child’s family to support the learner*”, “*parents to take responsibility*” and on the learners themselves.

The SMT, with the exception of the deputy principal, were sceptical about the idea, citing unemployed graduates, the need for awareness campaigns and staff not having the capacity to do it. The deputy principal, like the educators-participants, embraced the idea saying: “*That would certainly be great ... we need all skills and everyone to be involved, this thing does not stop at school, it’s beyond that, it’s at home, it’s the peers, it’s all spheres of life*”.

4.12 Limiting factors from the SMT’s perspective

The limiting factors expressed by members of the SMT are the same as those expressed by educators. These factors include: the environment in which the school is situated; lack of commitment on the part of learners; lack of parental support; limited resources; and lack of funding. The views of the SMT about these were discussed in the respective sections such as 4.7.1.1; 4.7.3; 4.7.5; 4.8.9.

4.13 From the documents

Having looked at the school’s mission and vision statement, year plans, matric results improvement plan and minutes of staff meetings, I thought that the contents of some could be cited appropriately when I deal with recommendations in the next chapter.

⁷ Mass mobilization is my own term referring to a conscious effort by stakeholders in education at all levels to work together in ensuring that schools succeed in producing quality grade 12 passes for higher education that those learners aspiring to HE pass requirements are met.

4.14 Way forward

The SMT, having expressed their views about factors they thought influenced grade 12 learners to pursue higher education, put forward ideas about what could be done about the challenges that faced the school. Each one emphasized a different view of a way forward from which a plan of action for the future can be drawn.

The HOD Humanities' emphasis was on parent involvement, using the media as an educational resource, of obtaining the services of community-based organisations to access funding and the church for moral regeneration.

HOD Humanities: That starts at home where parents can supervise the work of the learners and encourage them to study, encourage them to go to extra classes that are organised for them. The thing about extra classes goes hand in hand with the media conveying educational information in subjects like Biology and so on. This is aired on Radio Umhlobo Wenene. Churches can also assist and conscientise learners about what is expected of them. The community can organise financial assistance for learners. I'm referring to organisations like Masifunde, Gadra and the like because they are community-based organisations.

The HOD Maths & Science shared the same view as the HOD Humanities about family involvement when she said: *"Family is the main thing. Family is the one which should be constantly telling the student: education is important, you have to work, if you don't you won't get that. If that is not coming from the family, no matter how much the Department and other people can try to push, the effect will be minimal"*. This view corresponds with what appears in the schools mission and vision statement about increasing parents' involvement in school activities.

The HOD Languages seemed more concerned about the visible unemployment of graduates that left the youth disillusioned and demotivated about higher education and its benefits. He saw a need for a system that would ensure employment upon getting a qualification, so for him the way forward was: *"Making learners see the benefits (of higher education) because presently our youth is totally disillusioned and demotivated and something urgent needs to be done. People come from institutions of higher learning and they can't find jobs, when they apply they cannot get in because they don't have experience. It demotivates other people behind them (meaning learners).*

So you need to find a system that will ensure that if you get a qualification you move forward”.

The Deputy Principal saw a need for re-training of educators instead of the Winter and Spring schools, which, according to the interview data, were poorly attended. His other suggestions were: goal-setting, which is a lifeskill for learners, and the establishment of a technical high school in Grahamstown. Regarding a way forward he said:

“Instead of these Winter and Spring schools, they should rather train teachers because a lot of the teachers are having problems. They should train teachers at the beginning of the year in the different subjects like Maths, Physics, Accounting because those are problem subjects. Train these teachers, give them intensive 2 or 3 weeks training, and show them because a lot of them are lacking. Goal-setting, because a lot of them (meaning learners) do not have these goals. There’s a problem of skills. In Grahamstown we are kind of more on the academic side and there are a lot of kids with skills, it’s not provided for because we don’t have a technical school here. That’s why you find some of the kids are frustrated, they are suited for skills like motor mechanics. But now they sit on the academic side because there’s no alternative and that frustrates them as well. If we can have one technical school, I’m not saying it’s going to solve all the problems, but it will certainly help address some of the challenges we are facing”.

Goal-setting is part of the Life Orientation curriculum, but it can be dealt with across the curriculum from as early as grade 8. The establishment of a technical high school in Grahamstown East can possibly alleviate the problem of inappropriate subject choices that contribute to the failure rate at the school. It is a long-term solution that depends on negotiations with the Department of Education.

The Principal was uncertain about a way forward, but was certain about change and about education being an investment and a long-term benefit in the future. This is how he expressed his view about a way forward:

“I don’t know really, but what I can say is simply that education is an investment and we hope things will change, therefore it would be a good thing for a child to stay ready because, if things change for the better and one is not qualified, then again one will be in trouble. So I think that one needs more motivational talks than any other thing, to have a child not looking at the immediate future, but at the long-term benefit”.

In the next chapter conclusions will be drawn and recommendations made and areas of further research will be suggested.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I briefly state the research question and motivation for this research; summarise main findings; make recommendations for changing practices at the research site; discuss limitations of this research and suggest areas for further research.

This research has been aimed at contributing to an understanding of the factors that influence Grahamstown East grade 12 learners to aspire to higher education. It has been an attempt to look into learners' aspirations, their vision for the future and what they need to realize their aspirations and vision for the future, considering their disadvantaged and impoverished home and school backgrounds. The first research question was: what factors drive grade 12 learners from Phaphamani High School to aspire to higher education despite their disadvantaged socio-economic and educational backgrounds and the persistently poor performance of their school in grade 12? The second research question was: what can the school do to support learners who aspire to higher education?

5.2. Summary of findings

There is no doubt that learners doing grade 12 at Phaphamani Secondary School have aspirations and visions for their future, mainly to escape poverty and to improve their quality of life. They envision themselves as successful professional people with academic qualifications in the future. In other words, higher education is seen as something that can help provide economic independence, social mobility, personal enrichment and empowerment. This is a reflection of Appadurai (2001)'s argument that:

The capacity to aspire provides an ethical horizon within which more concrete capabilities can be given meaning, substance and sustainability. ... the exercise and nature of these capabilities verifies and authorizes the capacity to aspire and

moves it away from wishful thinking to thoughtful wishing. ... a deeper capacity to aspire can only strengthen the poor as partners in the battle against poverty (2001:16-17).

5.3 Enabling factors

From the learners' perspective, the most prominent factors that seem to influence grade 12 learners to aspire towards higher education are: school experiences, information on HE; their vision for the future; values ascribed to and support from parents and educators. From the parents' perspective, the following factors were identified: providing and taking responsibility for their children's education; support, love and encouragement. On the part of the educators, the factors given were: motivation; encouragement and guidance; motivational talks and excursions; and twinning with former model C schools. The SMT's ideas were pretty much the same as those of educators, but due to their managerial position other factors such as imparting academic skills, establishing guidance policies and programmes, strengthening existing learner support programmes, increasing the numbers of learners qualifying for HE; keeping the available pool of learners motivated and mobilizing the learners for HE became apparent. These factors seemed more like recommendations than findings and have therefore been included in the recommendations section.

5.3.1 School experiences

Positive school experiences came out of things that learners liked such as: the best memories of the school that they had and how the school had shaped their plans for the future. These included excelling in sport; academic performance; good relationships with educators; opportunities to get training in business, leadership and other life skills; and career-related educational excursions.

5.3.2 Information on higher education

There was evidence from the data that although learners would have liked to study further, they had very little information about higher education. The information

given by the student recruitment officers from universities and technikons was not adequate. Learners who had information on HE such as entrance requirements, duration of studies and how to access funding, seemed to know what they wanted to study and where they wanted to be in the future.

5.3.3 Vision for the future

Learners who aspired to HE were able to envision themselves completing their studies and becoming successful professional people in the near and distant future. They also believed that the qualities they possessed such as “hard work” and “dedication” would enable them to make their vision a reality.

5.3.4 Values and support

What learners valued most in life, like education; getting a profession; achieving one’s goals; doing the right thing at the right time; having a direction in life; exercising one’s choice; belief in oneself; having a vision, dreams, confidence, drive, discipline and a sense of responsibility were some of the factors that made learners aspire to HE. Support from parents, family, educators and the SMT is one of the factors that seemed to encourage learners to want to study further. The support they needed seemed to include emotional, material, financial and physical support from parents. Parents did offer emotional support in terms of encouragement, however they had not been able to provide material and financial support for higher education. In terms of their failure to attend parents’ meetings and other school activities, they were failing to show their support by being absent.

5.3.5 Parents’ provision and responsibility for their children’s education

Although there was an evident lack of financial provision and expected responsibility for their children’s education, learners perceived their parents as supportive of their vision to pursue HE. The least that parents claimed to have done was to give emotional support such as love and encouragement to their children. Educators had criticised the parents’ lack of involvement in school activities. The SMT did not seem

to have control of the situation because educators commented: “*there’s no follow-up*”; “*the situation just stays the same*”.

5.3.6 Motivation

A factor that educators and the SMT identified was intrinsic motivation. Although the majority of the learners did not demonstrate this factor, the educators alluded to the fact that the research participants had it when they referred to the few learners who had attended the extra classes and the Graeme College partnership. For instance, Lindie’s (a research participant’s) name was mentioned among those who were “*committed*”, “*a sure pass*” (see Section 4.9.4). Thus, there is evidence that the research participants show intrinsic motivation despite having everything stacked against them, whereas the majority of their peers do not.

5.3.7 Motivational talks and excursions

The motivational talks and excursions seemed to have been used as a window through which the grade 12 learners could look to get exposure to the world of careers and other possibilities out there and they learners seemed to have benefited from them. They were able to gain information about HE and related careers.

5.3.8 Educators’ encouragement and guidance

Educators maintained that, through their encouragement and guidance, they influence learners to aspire to HE. Learners also thought that educators were encouraging them to pursue HE. Msutwana (2004:115) had also found that a teacher’s attitude plays a role in the classroom and that teacher support contributes to the learners’ level of motivation.

5.4 Limiting factors

5.4.1 Choice of School

Although it seemed economically advantageous for parents to enrol their children at Phaphamani Secondary School for reasons of affordability and proximity to the homes of learners, it was a disadvantage for learners for a number of reasons. Firstly, the constant lack of resources and school funds impact on tuition and practical lessons as the BE and Home Economics educators indicated respectively. Secondly, the school's MIP status was an indication that the environment tended to limit the performance of learners that could enable them to earn bursaries for higher education. This factor seemed to contribute to the reproduction of the learners' working class status in that without a qualification and with poor grade 12 results they are destined for menial jobs, which will reproduce their working class status. Thirdly, the diminishing environment figures at the school seemed to indicate that the school was no longer able to attract learners as it did during the time of its establishment. The fact that some parents "didn't find any thing wrong with the school corresponds with Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence that refers to how the working class accept as natural, practices that are actually against their own best interest. Further, it also corresponds to Bourdieu's claim that schooling legitimises and re-inforce the disadvantage of learners.

5.4.2 Negative school experiences

Negative school experiences such as attending a school with bad results; neglect by some educators, lack of professionalism and discipline by some educators; conflict between learners and educators lack of motivation by the majority of learners can influence some learners negatively towards aspiring to higher education because such factors create barriers to learning which limit the learners' potential to do well in school and further their studies.

5.4.3. Lack of information on HE and careers

There was evidence that due to a lack of a School Guidance and Counselling programme which could include career guidance the majority of the research participants had very limited information on where to study, and available careers. The evident lack of this vital information is a limiting factor in deciding to pursue HE and inevitably helps reproduce the unskilled labour force, which in turn reproduces the working class status of the learners. This affirms critical theory's claim that working class pupils are not in control of their education, as they were never meant to see an educational future beyond school.

5.4.4 Lack of commitment and motivation on the part of learners

It was evident that there was lack of commitment, determination and motivation among the majority of learners at the school. While the research participants in this study showed commitment, determination and motivation to go further with their education, the majority of their peer did not seem committed to their education at all. The non-participation in learner-support programmes designed for learners showed some resistance to improving their performance. In other words, they seemed to oppose programmes that had the potential to improve their performance, which in turn attract bursaries and enable them to enrol at tertiary institutions. Their "opposition" to learner support programmes inevitably contributed to the reproduction of their disadvantage. In other words through their resistance, the opposing group contribute to their own "failure". This indicates the critical theory's view of how resistance reproduces inequality of economic relations (Gibson 1986:159).

5.4.5 Lack of funding

Funding for higher education studies seemed to be one of the most essential needs of the learners in this study. It was evident that their parents had not made financial provision for their children's education due to their low income or unemployment in some cases. Secondly, the learners' poor performance at this particular school did not seem to attract bursaries for learners to study further and this state of affairs inevitably relegated learners to a working class position as they end up joining the unskilled

labour force. This affirms the critical theory's notion of the reproduction of economic relations.

5.4.6 Lack of parental involvement

There was evidence that learners needed parental support in their education. Contrary to this, parents had not been able to provide any financial support for their children's higher education studies citing poverty and unemployment as the reasons. This could make it almost impossible for learners to register at higher education institutions. Further, educators commented that *"parents are passive", "they are not involved in school activities", "they don't attend parents' meetings", "It is difficult to get hold of a learner's parent to discuss the progress of their child... it takes one to three months for a parent to come"*.

Parents' lack of involvement in their children's education could limit the latter's aspirations for HE since it is something "foreign" to their home given their parents' low level education.

5.4.7 Lack of career guidance and counselling and academic skills

Learners, educators and some members of the SMT expressed that career guidance and counselling as well as were needed at the school as study skills. The school's persistently poor grade 12 results over the years, lack of information on higher education, the inability of some SMT members to provide exact details of what academic skills they imparted to the learners in their respective subjects, under-utilisation of the Guidance HOD and the perceptions by some educators that Guidance is for "White schools" or for schools "overseas" clearly indicated that there was a lack of vision in the school regarding the importance of Guidance and the role it can play in bringing about improvement in learners' performance and throughput. The unwillingness of the educators to support the proposal of the Guidance HOD to deal full-time with Guidance issues at the school indicated resistance to something that had a potential to improve the situation at the school. The resistance corresponds with the critical theory's idea that the act of opposition itself contributes to the opposing group's "failure" because in the case of Phaphamani, the grade 12 results were poor

over many years whereas, had Guidance. Having summarised the findings, I will make recommendation in the next section.

5.4.8 The environment in which the school is situated

The environment in which the research participant” school and homes are situated is riddled with crime, poverty and unemployment. The school principal in his interview stated that “ social factors influence education and that the criminal way of making living “may not make our learners see education as a need”. Observing a criminal way of life that seems to be an easy way of poverty rather than the education route which is long and requires effort in terms of studying may discourage learners from aspiring to HE.

The visibly high rate of unemployment in the Eastern Cape community in general, and among HE graduates (some of whom are siblings of the learners at the school)specifically seemed to be a deterrent in aspiring to HE and brought about unwillingness among some members of the SMT to “convince learners to go to a tertiary institution”, Unemployment of parents could bring about frustration and powerlessness among learners making their personal destinies to be out of their own control, a view upheld by critical theorists.

Worth mentioning at this point is that factors that seemed to influence grade 12 learners to aspire to higher education co-existed with other factors that contradicted them. These factors included choice of school; negative school experiences; lack of information on higher education; lack of commitment on the part of learners; lack of funding; lack of parental involvement; lack of career guidance and counselling and academic skills; and the unfavourable environment in which the school is situated. These factors, however, have already been described in detail in the previous chapter, and will therefore be summarised below.

5.5 Recommendations

Arising from the findings, I would like to make the following recommendations:

- The school management team and educators together with the parents and learners should revisit the school's mission and vision statement. The purpose should be, firstly, to remind themselves of the contents; secondly, to check to what extent they still adhere to what is laid down therein, if necessary find ways to be on track; finally, to do a SWOT analysis to enable them to implement their mission and to realize their vision.
- The school management team should find strategies to improve and strengthen parental involvement by making all possible efforts to invite, engage, guide and educate (where necessary) parents with regard to issues affecting their children's education. An idea would be to invite experts to give presentations at each parents' meeting about an area on which parents need information on. It would be better still if parents themselves identified areas in which they would like assistance or information with regard to their involvement at the school. However, it must be borne in mind that it takes a lot of creativity and enthusiasm to get parents to attend a meeting at school. Parents need to feel welcome at the school and the tone of the invitation should be friendly and the school should be sensitive to the fact that many parents are illiterate (Louw, Edwards and Orr 2001:87-88).
- A life skills programme focusing on personal, educational and career counselling for all learners should be established. This should include the supply of information on higher education. A section of the school library could be used to display posters, leaflets and booklets from the various colleges, technikons and universities. Learners should also be encouraged to go out to the community libraries and Rhodes University to find out more about HE.
- A Careers Day can be revived and made an annual event.
- The school can subscribe to a local Internet service provider and have learners searching for information on the Internet using the school's computer centre.

- Improve and strengthen the existing learner support programmes such as extra classes in the afternoons, on Saturdays, Winter and Spring schools and make them attractive and worthwhile to learners. Parents should be involved in monitoring their children's attendance of such programmes. The nature and timing of such programmes need to be reviewed and every effort should be made to make these programmes exciting for learners.
- Continue to forge partnerships with other institutions that will assist the school with skills and expertise to realize the school's mission and vision to the maximum benefit of the learners.
- Engage in whole school development as a way of institutional development referred to in the mission and vision statement.
- Mobilize learners for higher education and make means to keep them motivated despite the odds. This should help to increase the number of learners from Phaphamani who qualify for higher education and to lift the school out of its MIP situation. At this point I would like to give my idea of mass mobilization at the school. I had envisioned mobilizing-the-learners-for-higher-education as a strategy that can benefit the various Phaphamani Secondary School stakeholders in different ways. The school management team can spearhead, monitor and evaluate the process of institutional development, incorporate the parents and make use of the expertise of the wider community, through partnerships forged with institutions that share the school's mission and vision as stated in the school's mission and vision statement. Parents can play a visible role in supporting their children and in matters of school governance as stated in the school's mission and vision statements. Educators can plan and perform their duties with the common goal of constantly unearthing, nurturing and developing talent through academic excellence and holistic personal development of each and every learner, as spelt out in the mission and vision. This programme can help parents to plan ahead, even for their younger children, who have not reached secondary level education. Educators can impart academic skills in their different subjects and help learners do career searches about the subjects they do through research projects. The SMT can monitor and evaluate progress and offer support where necessary. Life skills such as self-awareness, goal-setting,

communication, decision-making, time management and so on, can be dealt with across the curriculum by the Life orientation educator in conjunction with other educators.

- Re-train educators to empower them in skills that they lack which are essential for them to develop the learners, particularly in “problem subjects” that lower the school’s grade 12 results, as suggested by the Deputy Principal.
- A technical college needs to be established in Grahamstown East for those learners who are not academically inclined as suggested by the Deputy Principal. However, this will require the involvement of other stakeholders in education and in community development.

5.6 Limitations of the research

For me there were three major limitations in this research.

- Firstly, I did not find it easy to conduct research at a school where I was an insider occupying a teaching and a management position. I was not sure how much my colleagues would be willing to reveal to me as a researcher about their school particularly because the question of grade 12 learners’ performance has always been a thorny issue. There was no way I could talk about grade 12 learners and higher education without touching upon what colleagues were doing about it, as subject educators and as school management team members. However, I was able to gain their trust and there was no hesitation on their side the information that was enormously rich, descriptive and useful.
- Secondly, language was a limitation in the sense that both the researcher and research participants: learners, parents, educators are not mother tongue speakers of English. Questionnaires for learners were prepared and completed in English and some learners need clarity about some of the questions. Interviews for parents, educators and the SMT were prepared in English. Individual interviews for educators and the SMT were conducted in English, whereas for parents they were conducted in both Xhosa and English to

accommodate those parents who did not understand English well. Two SMT members not mother tongue Xhosa or English speakers and so although interviews with them were conducted in English it was difficult to pick up properly what they were saying when I did the transcriptions. However, when I rewinded the tapes several times, I was able to hear what they were saying.

- Synthesizing and interpreting the large amounts of data was not very easy, especially the rich and descriptive statements of educators and the SMT. However, I am confident that I managed to work through the data critically but successfully.

5.7 Suggestions for further research

The value of case studies is believed to lie in their ability to provide insight that may be pursued in subsequent studies (Berg 1998). I have identified the following as possible areas for further research:

- How to maximise parent involvement in secondary schools from disadvantaged communities.
- Strategies for strengthening learner support programmes in poorly performing secondary schools.
- Non-academic career aspirations for deprived learners.
- Sustaining effective twinning of deprived and affluent schools.
- Effective vision crafting and whole school development in a deprived environment.

5.8 Conclusion

This has only been an exploratory study and I do not claim to provide any definite answers to questions related to the case, but I believe that this research will make a contribution to the understanding of factors that influence grade 12 learners to aspire to higher education and to learner support programmes in disadvantaged schools.

I hope that the findings I have come up with have helped to not only to “understand this one case” (Stake 1995) but are also generalizable because according to Berg (1998), case studies that are rigorously conducted can provide understanding of other similar cases.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1

ETHICAL STATEMENT

I am conducting research for my Master of Education degree. I am investigating factors that influence Grahamstown East Grade 12 learners' decisions to pursue higher education.

As a researcher working with learners, educators, and parents of Phaphamani Secondary School I undertake to adhere to:

- a) Confidentiality
- b) Respect for freedom of expression
- c) Using data for research purposes only

Z.N.A. Burns-Ncamashe

SIGNATURE

CONSENT

I,, Learner/Educator/Principal/Parent (delete what is not applicable), at Phaphamani Secondary School agree to participate in this research. I do not object to the use of research equipment such as cameras, audio and videotapes by the researcher for the purpose of the study.

SIGNATURE:

SIGNATURE OF PARENT:
(In case of a learner)

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

A. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: Pseudo name:
Sex: Date of Birth:
Age: Place of Birth:
Home Language: Place of Birth:
Religion: Residential Address:
Home Tel. No:
Hobbies:
Other Involvements:

B. RESIDENTIAL INFORMATION

No. of years in present address:
Previous residential address:
Reasons for moving from previous address:
.....
Is present residence owned/rented by parents?

C. PARENTS & ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

a. What is the marital status of your parents? (circle relevant response)

Single Married Divorced Separated

b. What is your parents' level of education? (circle relevant response)

Mother: Primary Secondary Matric Beyond matric

Father: Primary Secondary Matric Beyond matric

- c. What is your mother's occupation? (circle relevant response)
- Domestic General Professional Other (specify)
-
- d. What is you father's occupation? (circle relevant response)
- Domestic General Professional Other (specify)
-
- e. Who is your mother's employer? (circle relevant response)
- Private sector Business Company Government Self-employed
- Unemployed
- f. Who is your father's employer? (circle relevant response)
- Private sector Business Company Government Self-employed
- Unemployed
- g. What positions are held by your mother in the community?
(circle relevant response and elaborate in the line below)
- Education Church Politics Sport Cultural Business
-
- h. What positions are held by your father in the community?
(circle relevant response and elaborate in the line below)
- Education Church Politics Sport Cultural Business
-
- i. What is your mother's income per month? (circle relevant response)
- R0 – R500 R600 - R1000 R1000 – R3000 +R3000
- j. What is your father's income per month? (circle relevant response)
- R0 – R500 R600 – R1000 R1000 – R3000 +R3000

- k. Are there other sources of income in your household?
(circle relevant response)

Business Old-age pension Child care grant Disability grant

D. HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS & THEIR ACTIVITIES

- a. Who are the other household members, other than your parents and yourself?

Siblings Stepsiblings Grandparents Relatives

Other (specify)

- b. How many of your siblings are still at school?

- c. Where do they go to school? (circle relevant response)

Town Township Farm Out of Town

- d. Do you have siblings who are in higher education institutions?

How many?

- e. Are any members of the wider family **in** higher education institutions?

.....

- f. Do any members of the wider family **have** higher education qualifications?

.....

Name of qualifications:

- g. Do you have siblings who are employed?

How many?

- h. What is their level of education?

- i. Where are they employed?

- j. What is their contribution to the household? (circle relevant response)

Education Rent Clothing Building & renovations

Other (specify)

- k. What kind of support do they give you?

E. SCHOOL

I. Why did you register at the present school?

.....

II. For how long have you been a learner at this school?
(circle relevant response)

Less than 5 years

5 years

6 years

over 6 years

III. What do you like most about your school?

.....

.....

IV. What do you dislike about your school?

.....

.....

V. What is the best experience you have ever had at this school?

.....

.....

VI. What is the worst experience you have ever had at this school?

.....

.....

VII. What is the best memory of the school that you are taking away with you at the end of this year?

.....

.....

VIII. What role has the school played in shaping your plans for the future?

.....
.....

IX. What, in your opinion, should the school do to support its learners who want to pursue higher education?

.....
.....

F. EDUCATION

I. Where would you like to study after grade 12? (circle relevant response)

College Technikon University

II. What is your proposed field of study? (circle relevant response)

Arts/Languages Business/Commerce
Technology/Science/Engineering

Law Other(Specify)

.....

III. Do you have information about I and II above?

Yes No

IV. Do you know the entrance requirements for your chosen field of study?

Yes No

V. Do you know how to get financial aid for your studies?

Yes No

VI. How did you get information about I – V above?

School Resource Centre Parents Careers Day

Recruitment Officers from institutions

Other (specify).....

VII. What do you see as benefits of higher education qualifications?

.....

.....

.....

VIII. What possible problems could prevent you from completing your higher education studies?

.....

.....

.....

.....

IX. How will you ensure that you obtain your higher education qualifications?

.....

.....

.....

X. How do your parents and wider family feel about your idea of pursuing higher education studies?

.....

.....

XI. How do your teachers feel about your idea of pursuing higher education studies?

.....

.....

G. EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPE LEARNER'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE

I. What do you feel is important in life?

.....

II. What vision of yourself do you have for the future?

.....

III. What are you doing to make that vision a reality?

.....

.....

IV. What do you need to make this vision a reality?

.....

.....

.....

V. Write about how you see your life in 3-4 years time

.....

.....

.....

VI. Write about how you see your life in 5-10 years time

.....

.....

.....

.....

- VII. What in your opinion, should parents and family, school and community do to support learners who want to pursue higher education after grade 12?

.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR MAKING TIME TO COMPLETE THIS
QUESTIONNAIRE,
ALL THE BEST IN YOUR ENDEAVOURS TO MAKE YOUR VISION
FOR THE FUTURE A REALITY.

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: EDUCATORS

1. What factors in your opinion, influence decisions of grade 12 learners to pursue higher education?
2. What do you think these learners need in order to succeed in higher education? (e.g. study skills, emotional support, financial support, learner support materials)
3. Who do you see as responsible for meeting these needs?
4. What do you see as the role of the school in preparing these learners for higher education studies?
5. As a subject teacher, what do you actually do to prepare these learners for higher education?
6. How would you rank your contribution in influencing these learners to pursue higher education and why?
7. Are there any limitations in supporting these learners' educational aspirations?
8. How do you feel about mass mobilization of grade 12's from disadvantaged communities for higher education?

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PRINCIPAL

1. How do you, the School Manage Team (SMT) and the staff become aware that there are grade 12 learners wanting to pursue higher education?
2. How do they bring this to the attention of the school?
3. What do you think they understand by higher education and its benefits?
4. Given the persistently low matric pass rate in the Eastern Cape, and in this school in particular, over the last few years what factors do you think influence grade 12 learners to aspire to higher education?
5. What do you, as the head of the school, see as their needs in order to succeed in higher education studies?
6. Who do you see as responsible for meeting these needs?
7. Tell me about the school's long-term plan / programme to prepare these learners for higher education studies.
8. Rank the success of this programme in preparing learners for higher education.
9. Are there any limitations in preparing the school's grade 12 learners for higher education?
10. The DoE's target is to increase the participation rate of 18-24 year olds enrolled in higher education from 15%-24% in the next 10 to 15 years. Now, if schools were given the challenge of helping to meet this target by ensuring that each learner comes out of school qualified to enter higher education, how would you go about meeting this target?

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PARENTS

1. Why did you send your child to Phaphamani Secondary School?
2. Are you aware of your daughter/son's plans after grade 12?
3. Why do you think he/she wants higher education qualifications?
4. What provision have you made for that: emotionally, financially and otherwise to support him/her?
5. What do you see as your role/family's role in preparing/supporting your son/daughter's aspirations to pursue higher education studies?
6. What do you see as his/her needs from now until she/he attains her/his qualifications?
7. What kind of support do you/family give to ensure that your son/daughter goes for higher education studies?
8. Is this support enough? If not what more could be done?
9. Where do you see your son/daughter in 5 – 10 years time?
10. What do you think parents, families and communities from disadvantaged backgrounds should do to support learners who aspire to higher education qualifications after grade 12?

APPENDIX 8

Summary of data from parents and guardians

Table 4.8

Theme	Amaya's aunt	Chosen's mother	Devante's father	Glen's aunt	King's mother	Lindie's mother	Reebo's mother	Weja's mother
Reasons for enrolling child at Phaphamani	It is a good school, tuition is good, it is close by	It was recommended, there is discipline	He didn't get on with certain teachers at the previous school so we decided to send him to a different school	All my other children went to this school up to matric	He failed grade 10 at the previous school so he and other children in this area changed schools so he came to this school	Her brother came here first and he did well, I didn't find anything wrong with the school, it is quite close for them to walk	We saw that children from this school pass, I was interested that my child comes here, there are strict rules here	Her performance deteriorated at the previous school so I thought it was a good idea to change schools. My son also came to this school and he did well
Provision made for higher education	None, because we don't want to reach any conclusion and get disappointed later if money is not available. His uncle is still unemployed. There is nothing prepared for	As a pensioner it is not easy to save money. His sister is the one who contributes towards his education, I depend on her. She has applied for a bursary on his behalf	I'm unemployed, his mother is also unemployed. Financially, as I've already said, we are bankrupt	We haven't really come to a conclusion. We haven't decided about anything	I spoke to his uncle who works in the Transkei and he said he'll phone me to discuss what King should do	Because we are poor people from the farm, we were not able to prepare anything	I had started saving money in the bank, but his brother passed away so I had to use that money for funeral costs. I'll start saving again	I haven't made preparations yet. I've spoken to her uncle who works at the Municipality about a bursary that is offered there. He is assisting us with that

	him							
Identified needs for higher education	Registration fees, bedding, food, rent if he is not in residence	A conducive environment, stability and perseverance	Competence, money	I don't know unless we ask him, maybe we should call him and find out what he needs	I don't know but I can see that he is determined to get education. We are not educated but we wish he can be	Lindie is not a child who has too many needs. It's clothing that she needs most	Clothes to look presentable, faith, money	Fees, books, and support
Support given to child to ensure child enters higher education and succeed	Remind him about his background and difficult circumstances when he gets a bursary he must remember that, work hard and pass	We encourage him to communicate, to be practical, we provide information about careers, access to funding and job opportunities	The are places I went to, like Gadra, to seek advice but all was in vain, my attempts were fruitless. I am still trying	I said he should go and enquire about financial aid and then repay the money after he finishes studying	We want him to go further with his studies but we have a problem of unemployment because the pension grant is not enough	We encourage her to study, we try to provide her with what she needs as soon as we possibly can	Love from parents and encouragement	Encourage her to work hard and behave herself
Why they think their child wants higher education	He'd like to work and improve things here one day. He really wants to progress in life, have a good job, money and give something back to the people who raised him	He sees the difficulty at home and wants to be able to improve conditions at home	For the betterment of his life and family	I think young people today do not want to say: "Good morning Master", they want to be independent	He likes progress, he wants to become something	She says she wants to study medicine, become a G.P. with her own practice and help people	At home nobody is educated, which makes him want to further his education, he comes from a very, very poor home	She wants to learn more

Reading material provided since child was small	Some books, I don't know really	Books, he has excellent writing skills and always visits the library	Books supplied at school, novels and newspapers	He read siblings' books here at home	There are books that he reads in his caravan	She likes reading. We bought her magazines	He likes magazines. He likes the Bible	Newspapers and other books
What parents, family and communities should do to support learners wanting higher education	Provide clothing and food, help whenever they need anything	Save money from as early as possible and instil perseverance	Encourage, motivate him	Encourage them not to lose hope	(No response given, the parents did not answer this question though they were given time to think about it)	I'm not able to respond especially because on the farm, which is my community, there are no parents who've sent their children to university, otherwise I'd ask them	Start a project raise funds, pay fees for needy children	Form an association, sell crafts, meet our children's needs
Where they see their child in 5 – 10 years time	I see him as a successful person. I also wish that his dreams may come true	I see him having finished his studies, working and realising his dream	I see him as a leader, he's shown leadership skills. The guy we are talking about made his mark in sport. He got 3 medals in athletics. Such achievements raise my hopes that his future will be bright	My wish is that he studies and becomes a medical doctor or a teacher	We wish he could be what he wants to be and be successful	I see her working hard, determined to achieve her goals	I wish he could finish studying, work in an office and manage people	I see her with a bright future, useful in society

APPENDIX 9

The mission and vision statement

PHAPHAMANI SECONDARY SCHOOL

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

VISION

IN PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, HOLISTIC PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HIGH MORAL STANDARDS.

MISSION

TO EMPOWER AND CAPACITATE ALL TO MEET WITH CONFIDENCE THE DYNAMIC DEMANDS OF THE NATION IN TRANSITION AND TO ENABLE THIS INSTITUTION TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES ENTRUSTED UPON IT BY:

- (a) constantly unearthing, nurturing and developing talent
- (b) availing opportunities for full realization of potentialities
- (c) observing professional code of conduct for teachers
- (d) observing appropriate code of conduct for learners
- (e) abiding by the S.A. School's Act
- (f) promoting/elevating visible role of parents in matters of school governance
- (g) twinning, liaising and forging partnerships with other institutions that share our vision and mission
- (h) engaging in an institutional developmental programme

We commit ourselves to be guided by the following ethics and core values:

Participation
Transparency
Democracy
Accountability
Justice
Diligence
Punctuality
Compassion
Presentability (proper dress code)
Environmental awareness
Honesty

APPENDIX 10

Abridged 2003 Year Plan highlighting grade 12 activities	
20.01.2003:	Schools re-open: Term 1
21.01.2003:	Meeting with grade 12 educators: formulate Matric Improvement Plan
29.01.2003:	Meeting: SMT, grade 12 educators and learners
05.02.2003:	Meeting: SMT, grade 12 parents, educators and learners
27.03.2003:	Educational excursion: Port Alfred (grade 12)
31.03 – 04.04:	Grade 12 Autumn School
08.04.2004:	Schools re-open: Term 2
	Submission of projects
14 – 17. 04.2004:	Analysis of Term 1 mark sheets
	Motivational Talks
27.06.2004:	Grade 12 Winter School
22.07.2003:	Schools re-open: Term 3
07.08.2003:	Grade 12 Farewell Function
08.08.2003:	Grade 12 Submission of CASS ⁸ schedules
15.08.2003:	Grade 12 Submission of oral schedules
16.09.2003:	Trial examinations start
25.09.2003:	Prize – giving ceremony
26.09.2003:	Grade 12 Spring School
06.10.2003:	Schools re-open: Term 4
08.10.2003:	Prayer service for examinations
	Grade 12 seating arrangements
13.10.2003:	Grade 12 final examinations start
04.12.2003:	Subject / grade allocation for 2004
08.12.2003:	Preparations for 2004
09.12.2003:	End of term 4
30.12.2003:	Grade 12 results released at school

⁸ CASS refers to continuous assessment

APPENDIX 11

Matric Results Improvement Plan 2002: Phaphamani High School

- a) Aspects of Grade 12 syllabus to be covered in Grade 11.
- b) The school has affiliated to and is following All Saints College Education Development Partnership Programme for the first time this year.
- c) Assistance of Subject Advisors and E.D.O.⁹ to be sought.
- d) Continued attendance of workshops by teachers organized by the Department including M.I.P.¹⁰.
- e) Newspaper supplements for Matric to be sought for update on developments and classroom activities i.e. 'Learning Press Bank'.
- f) 'Suspect subjects' Those subjects that continue to pull down the school pass percentages are to be identified. A special focus will be given to them.
- g) Non-performing / weak learners will be identified and extra attention will be given during second term.
- h) Learner motivation programme is in place and teacher-parent consultation sessions will resume during the 2nd term.
- i) Extra classes during vacation and within the term will be introduced.
- j) Completion of syllabus by the end of 2nd term.
- k) Writing fully-fledged mid year examinations.

⁹ Education Development Officer

¹⁰ Matric Intervention Programme

APPENDIX 12 (A)

MINUTES OF THE STAFF MEETING HELD ON 11TH MARCH 2003 IN THE STAFF ROOM AT 13H30

PRESENT: Principal; Miss Burns-Ncamashe; Miss N.S.C; Miss N.M; Miss R.N.M; Miss T.M; Deputy Principal; H.O.D Maths & Science; Mr L.D.D; H.O.D Humanities; Miss B.V.N; Mrs N.T; Mr M.H.M; Mr M.E.K; Miss Z.N; Miss P.K; Mrs M.N.

1. **Opening Prayer:** Miss R.N.M.
2. **Welcome:** The Principal welcomed all present and declared the meeting open.
3. **Minutes of previous meeting:** Taken as read and principal asked for corrections/clarities. That having been done minutes were adopted.
4. **Matters arising:** There were none.
5. **Correspondence:** None. Grade 12 exam entries had been dealt with already.
6. **Reports:**
 - A. Imbewu (by Principal): Two day workshop was held at V.G.H.S. on 25th and 26th February. Principal and Mr M.T attended on behalf of the school.
 - a) *Purpose:* to build self-managing schools especially previously disadvantaged schools.
 - b) *Vision-crafting:* for school development with the view of transforming education to be done.
 - c) *Whole school development:* Focus not only on academic work but documents; school development and support systems; change management strategies (in writing); motto; achievement. School history to be narrated during relevant occasions.
 - d) *Aim:* to achieve effective teaching and learning as well as optimum learner performance.
 - B. Academic Improvement Plan (Deputy Principal)
 - a) *Syllabus:* To be finished by first week of third term.
 - b) *Study materials:* Available from All Saints College.
 - c) *Portfolio Covers:* Learners have to copy and attach on 1st page of their portfolios.
 - d) *Guidelines on essay-writing:* Document provided. Interested educators can access it through the clerk.
 - e) *M.I.P. School Improvement Workshop:* Documents from that workshop circulated. Of concern are pass requirements for matric endorsement/senior certificate which have been revised. Learners need to know about these from Grade 8.

C. Maintenance Committee (Mr M.H.M):

- a) *Lawn-cutting*: Teachers asked to provide names of service providers so that the school can choose a reasonable one.
- b) *Burglaries*: Security measures taken to curb these, security gate to be fitted at the bottom of the staircases.
- c) *Whole School Development*: Includes thorough cleaning of the school buildings.
- d) *Security*: School needs assistance in terms of covering padlocks for classrooms.
- e) *Premises*: Lawn-mowing.
- f) *Buildings*: Proposal to be tabled to S.G.B. that all broken windows be repaired.
- g) *Grounds & Gardens*: Educators asked to provide information as to how and where to get flowers, plants etc. to improve the appearance of the premises.
- h) *Lights*: to be fitted in the corridor between admin and classroom blocks.

D. St Andrews/DSG Initiative: Would like to interact with our learners on a project such as painting. It was agreed that Mrs M.N. (Environmental Club); H.O.D Humanities & Mr M.H.M (Buildings & Maintenance) look into this initiative.

E. Other Reports: None

7. **Announcements**: i) Casual Day, Friday, 14.03.03

- ii) Need for Guidance Committee to draw up programmes
- iii) Grade 12 outing compulsory for grade 12 teachers, R30 for teachers eats.
- iv) Payment of tickets for the fund-raising function (R.C.L) Committee to provide names to guardian teacher for them to help collect outstanding payments.

8. **Closure**: There being no further business meeting was closed at 14h20

APPENDIX 12 (B)

MINUTES OF THE STAFF MEETING HELD ON 22nd OCTOBER 2003 IN THE STAFF ROOM AT 13H30

PRESENT

Principal; Miss ZNA Burns-Ncamashe; Miss M.E.B; Miss N.F.G; Mrs M.N; Miss B.X; Miss R.N.M; Miss N.B.M; Mr P.A; Mr M.M.B; Mr M.H.M; Mr L.D.D; Mr M.M.L; H.O.D Humanities; Mr M.E.K; Mr S.N.D; Deputy Principal.

APOLOGIES

Miss T.Z.N; Miss T.M; Miss N.S.C; Miss N.C; Miss B.V.N & Mrs N.T.

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

Principal

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Taken as read and adopted

MATTERS ARISING

Spelling errors in some words

CORRESPONDENCE

- a) SAPS: Burglary case absorbed in police data base will be re-opened if new evidence comes up.
- b) Yizani Training Course: School Ministry
- c) Dept of Education: HIV/Aids School Week
- d) P.E. Mental Health Society: Seminar on Suicide
- e) Dept of Education: Policy on Promotion of Learners in Grade 9
- f) External Exams Circular 20/2003

EXAMS (Deputy Principal):

DATES OF SUBMISSION

Question papers	: 31.10.03
Mark lists	: 27.11.03
Schedules	: 28.11.03
Schedules to District Office	: 1 – 4 December 2003
Reports	: 05.12.03

CASS MARKS

Deputy Principal raised a concern that CASS marks were too high that students passed before actually writing exams. A suggestion was made that this be discussed at another forum.

TERM 3 WORK: Work was submitted on time. Appreciation was expressed to educators for submitting work timeously.

ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

Educators urged to hand them in every Friday to enable Principal to make a summary register. They should be handed in at the clerk's office.

LEARNERS WITH NO CASS MARKS

Educators need to work together and report this immediately.

OTHER REPORTS

- a) Entertainment Committee: 2003 a success, improvement in fundraising needed.
- b) Environment (Ms N.F.G): The committee are new in environmental issues so 2003 was more of awareness for them. Urged teachers and learners to be involved and supportive.
- c) Sport (Mr P.A): Only a few sport codes functioned this year: rugby, soccer, and netball. Love Life concerned that basketball is not played at the school after they came and erected poles. They intend to remove the poles if they are not used to play basketball.
Visit by Emmanuel Grammar School from England in August was the highlight of the sport year. Mr P.A also raised a concern about the consumption of liquor by learners during sport trips.
- d) Soccer (Mr M.B): out of the 14 matches played this year 12 were won and only 2 were lost. No jerseys for players which makes them de-motivated. He also asked for support from educators.
- e) S.C.O. (Ms N.F.G): Participation very poor this year, SCO camps failed. No support from educators.

CONCLUSION

Principal thanked committee chairperson for reports. Lack of support by educators needs to be addressed. Application forms for 2004 available at the clerk's office.

CLOSURE

There being no further business, the meeting was closed by prayer at 14h15.

APPENDIX 13

Abridged Code of Conduct for Learners

The Preamble

As learners of this school we have an obligation and responsibility to our education. We commit ourselves to the culture of reconciliation, teaching, learning, and mutual respect, tolerance, and peace in our school.

Responsibilities of Learners

1. School Rules

All learners are to be part of the process of developing school rules through their elected representatives inter-alia:- class reps, council and RCL executive components. As this formulation is owned by the entire community of Phaphamani Secondary School they are binding to all learners, educators and parents.

2. Learning and School Work

Learning is compulsory to all learners (core business).

All learners therefore are duly required to commit themselves to their schoolwork and learning (note making, class work, projects, oral evaluation and tests).

Any learner who undermines authority and disrupts schooling will be subjected to disciplinary measures or even be charged.

Punishment shall be weighed according to the nature and persistence of the offence.

3. School Attendance

All learners must attend school regularly.

An attendance register, period control register be implemented and be monitored regularly.

A notification letter to the parent whose child does not attend school for a week will be posted by the child's guardian teacher.

This notification letter seeks explanation on continued absence.

Documentary proof: Medical certificate or any other official obligation undertaken by the learner.

Truancy: Learners who leave school before the end of contact time must be disciplined and punished.

Again the period control system will assist in this regard.

Conclusion.

1. Corrective Measures

In conclusion our school guided by this code of conduct must exhaust all corrective measures such as:

Advice

Counselling

Penalties and reprimands

1.2 These corrective measures can be applied:

Verbally and in writing

Cleaning of the school environment

Replacements of damaged property

Suspension from school activities such as sport and cultural activities