

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION OF DATA AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to answer the two research questions which are posed in Chapter 1, viz.,

- Can the differences in the South African school leaving examination results of various schools in the Northern Province be partly attributed to the impact of the hidden curriculum?
- How does the hidden curriculum impact on the South African school leaving examination in the Northern Province?

The chapter intends to discuss the recommendations which are based on the identified attributes of the hidden curriculum which impact on the South African school leaving examination in the Northern Province. These are, *inter alia*, rating of the school's performance, expectation of the final results, commendations for exceptionably good pass rates, school discipline, learners' school attendance, learners' punctuality, learners' attendance of afternoon studies, enjoyment in heading the school, parental support and completion of the syllabi.

6.2 LIMITATIONS/POSSIBILITIES OF FACTOR ANALYSIS

The fact that I decided to investigate the impact of the hidden curriculum on the South African school leaving examination in the Northern Province does not in any way intend to nullify other factors which also impact on the school leaving examination. This study should be viewed as one of the lenses to view and interpret the ongoing problems surrounding the school leaving examination in the Northern Province. I acknowledge and I am aware of the ongoing impact of the socio-economic factors on the South African school leaving examinations (Mathonsi 1986) although I have decided to exclude them. I am also aware of the ongoing impact of resource provisioning on the South African school leaving examination in the Northern Province (Department of Education 1997) and have decided to exclude it as well. I am also aware of the

commitment and efforts of the Northern Province government to redress the ongoing impact of the socio-economic factors and resource provisioning on the Northern Province schools.

Although I intend to report on the impact of the hidden curriculum on the South African school leaving examination in the Northern Province, the survey has been limited to the Soutpansberg district due to financial and time constraints. Nonetheless, based on my experience as school principal currently working and living in that area, I am convinced that what the facts which have been revealed by the sample schools, remain a fair representation of Northern Province schools.

6.3 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND RATING OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

This study has revealed that the differences in the South African school leaving examination results of various schools in the Northern Province can be partly attributed to the impact of the hidden curriculum through the rating of school performance.

The fact that the principals of schools that perform very well are aware of their school's performance while those principals of schools which do not perform as well are not aware of their school's performance serve as a firm basis for improvement, development and sustainance. Having identified and acknowledging that the middle/bottom schools are not performing as expected, strategies and appropriate support services can be developed to improve the performance of such schools.

The fact that learners and educators of some of the middle/bottom performing schools rated their schools' performance as being good while it is poor, seems inconsistent with the actual situation and this encourages further poor performance by learners which will affect their entire lives. Dreeben (1968:71) argues that

“... pupils whose work is consistently poor not only must participate in achievement activities leading to their failure, they must also experience living with that failure.”

Learners and educators who rate their school's performance as being good while it is poor, may probably not even find it necessary to improve as they seem to be satisfied with their poor performance. The fact that such learners and educators viewed and rated their performance differently from the department of education and the public as a whole, can be misleading to themselves and may lead to continuous poor performance. The rating by the above-mentioned

learners and educators can be attributed to numerous factors, including an unwillingness to admit to the problem or ignorance with regard to what a good pass rate means. Intervention strategies are needed to awaken the consciences of such learners and educators in order to make them aware and acknowledge their poor performance. In order to improve the school's performance, those schools whose performance is poor should acknowledge their poor performance. This may also be the case with those schools which perform well, i.e. acknowledging their good performance and find ways of maintaining such performance.

Schools which do not perform well may not regard themselves as being incapable of performing well, but should view their failure to perform well as a temporary activity for that year only. By building on their failure, a clear capacity programme can be built which can ensure future performance improvement.

Principals, educators and learners of schools which do not perform well will have to change their attitude in order to improve their performance.

6.4 SCHOOLS' PERFORMANCE AND EXPECTATION OF FINAL RESULTS

This study has revealed that the differences in the South African school leaving examination results can be attributed to the expectation of final results. The research has indicated that there is a correlation between the expectation of the final results and the actual results. Schools in which learners, educators and principals have high expectations of the final results tend to perform better than schools which have low expectations. High and low expectations of the final results can be attributed to the positive or negative attitudes of educators, learners and principals. In defining attitude, Beck (2000:358) agrees that:

“Attitudes are positive or negative feelings about something ... Specifically, an attitude is a positive or negative affective response directed towards a specific person, object, situation, and so on.”

While negative feelings inhibit any type of performance, positive feelings enhance performance. Educators, principals and learners who expect good results are more likely to achieve better results than those who expect poor results.

As attitude is often defined in terms of its three components, viz. affective responses, cognition and conation, and in recognition that the three components influence each other, expectation of

the final results is an affective response. In defining affective response, Beck (2000:358) argues:

“This is the basic attitude, referring to a positive or negative feeling, a like or dislike, with regard to a particular person, object or thing.”

As attitudes influence behaviour or performance, a change in attitude is necessary in order to enhance learner performance. Since learners, educators and principals go to school having a common purpose, i.e. learning and teaching and good performance in the final examination, they have no sound reason to expect poor final results. Lynch (1989:32) argues:

“Teachers (especially in second level) must be seen to get results if they are to have professional credibility - the most visible results are the grade levels attained in public examinations.”

Instead of expecting poor results, i.e. having a negative feeling about the results, principals, learners and educators have to jointly work hard in order to attain good results. Considering the period during which the research was conducted, viz. April, May, June and irrespective of the weaknesses or problems encountered, the expectation of poor final results during those early months seems strange.

As a negative attitude is a critical barrier to effective learning, teaching and management, a change in attitude remains a crucial factor in enhancing performance.

6.5 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND COMMENDATION FOR SCHOOLS WITH EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD PASS RATES

This study has revealed that commendation for good pass rates impact on learner performance. It has been revealed that while principals of schools which perform very well identify themselves fully with the performance of their learners, principals of schools which perform poorly do not identify themselves with their learners' performance as they view poor learner performance as the responsibility of both educators and learners.

As the grade 12 results are used to evaluate the quality of learners, educators, the school and the education system as a whole (Lynch 1989:32), all the stakeholders, including principals, should accept responsibility for the results, irrespective of whether they are good or poor. The school leaving examination results do not only serve as a yardstick to gauge the quality of educators and

learners but also to evaluate the quality of the principal and his management team. In order to improve the results, principals, learners, educators and other stakeholders should view the final results as collaborative efforts and should own the results without shifting the blame.

6.6 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL REGULATIONS ON DISCIPLINE

Research has indicated that schools which have good discipline tend to perform better than schools which have poor discipline. While it is acknowledged that meaningful learning and teaching cannot take place without a certain minimal level of order and decorum, discipline should not be equated with authoritarianism or permissiveness. Discipline is seen as the orderly regulation of school activities to ensure that all efforts work towards achieving the set goals within the given time.

The importance of discipline is clearly explained by Cusick (1973:208) as he argues that:

“... to support that routinization, the school needs an extensive body of rules and regulations to ensure that the students adhere to the routine. Carrying with it a number of sanctions, these rules and regulations provide the incentive needed to make the students stay in a subordinate position.”

While each school is given the responsibility of formulating its own disciplinary policy (rules and regulations) as guided by broad departmental policy, discipline remains a universal cultural phenomenon that has four functions. Ausubel (1978:510-511) asserts that:

“... it is necessary for socialization, ... normal personality maturation, ... internalization of moral standards and obligations ... [and] children’s emotional security.”

While acknowledging that good discipline enhances learner performance, appropriate disciplinary practices will always differ from school to school and from time to time. Irrespective of the multi-disciplinary practices, i.e. the particularistic and universalistic practices, good school discipline should, *inter alia*, enhance learning and teaching which results in good performance.

Learner performance can be improved if those schools which perform poorly can be supported to

maintain appropriate discipline. This will undoubtedly require regular control, monitoring and assessment of these schools. Jackson (1990:13) asserts that:

“... some kinds of control are necessary, if the school’s goals are to be reached and social chaos averted.”

The unequal power relation gives educators more responsibility in maintaining school discipline, although learners are expected to stay in their subordinate position (Cusick 1973). This, however, does not imply that learners have no role to play in their own discipline. As the behaviour of learners is controlled, the behaviour of educators and the behaviour of the school need to be controlled. In dealing with learners, educators need to exercise equanimity as learners are confronted with the dilemma of complying with peer expectations and institutional expectations. Jackson (1990:13) asserts that:

“The problem for some, is how to become a good student while remaining a good guy, how to be at the head of the class while still being in the center of the group.”

Although learners are expected to comply with institutional expectations, the school may not breed docile learners but has to equip learners with skills of questioning and exploring. While the ultimate aim of institutional expectations is self-discipline, educators have to guard against learners who give only minimal compliance to discipline or who conform to institutional expectations for the sake of being praised as they know that non-conformity can lead to punishment. Cusick (1973:213) argues that:

“... students can do well in school even if they give only minimal compliance to the system.”

Differential disciplinary patterns of schools and differences in learner performances can probably be linked to class structures, i.e. the disciplinary patterns of schools reproduce the social and economic classes. Bowles and Gintis (1976:132) assert that:

“... working-class schools tend to emphasize behavioral control and rule-following, while schools in well-to-do suburbs employ relatively open systems that favor greater student participation, ... a value system stressing internalized standards of control.”

Differences in performance of learners can be attributed to the extent to which school norms are communicated and internalized by both educators and learners. Dreeben (1968:45) asserts that:

“The acceptance of norms is a variable, and refers to the extent to which a person imposes obligations on himself, to how intensely he holds them.”

Dreeben views the school’s function, *inter alia*, as helping learners to learn to accept social norms and to act accordingly since these norms that are tacitly learned penetrate many areas of learners’ future lives. Dreeben (1968:45) asserts that:

“... there is variation both in the degree of norm acceptance and in the relationship between the norm and behaviour oriented to it...”

In addition to the fact that learners come to school with the main aim of learning while educators come to school to teach, both learners and educators acknowledge directly or indirectly the need for discipline. Jackson (1990:30) argues:

“At the heart of the teacher’s authority is his command over students’ attention. Students are expected to attend to certain matters while they are in the classroom, and much of the teacher’s energies are spent in making sure that this happens.”

As research has indicated that schools which have poor discipline tend to perform poorly, it is mainly the educators’ responsibility to create a favourable discipline which will make learners learn and teachers teach.

Without lessening the responsibility of learners towards creating a favourable discipline for themselves, educators, particularly principals, have a task of creating or enforcing discipline where it seems lacking even if it may seem to be prescriptive or restrictive. Jackson (1990:30) affirms:

“The important point is that students must learn to employ their executive powers in the service of the teacher’s desires rather than their own even if it hurts.”

While it is acknowledged that learners and educators have a role to play in creating the necessary school discipline, noting that learners may not always be blamed for poor school discipline, research indicates that educators in the schools performing poorly do not exert enough effort in creating or enforcing discipline.

6.7 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND THE LEARNERS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

This study has revealed that the differences in the South African school leaving examination results of various schools in the Northern Province can be partly attributed to the impact of the hidden curriculum through the school attendance of learners. The research has indicated that schools which have good learner school attendance tend to perform better than schools which have poor learner attendance. School attendance impacts on all the school activities and is a basic condition of being a learner. Absenteeism hampers any form of performance, including school performance. Jackson (1990:85) asserts:

“Nothing is more obvious than that a student must be in attendance if he is to enjoy the benefits of instruction, and from a recognition of this truism have sprung teachers registers ... and other well-known school practices, all designed to monitor the student's physical presence.”

School attendance, i.e. physical presence of the learners, serves as a basic condition for being a learner. While educators and parents have the responsibility of encouraging learners to attend school regularly, the final responsibility of attendance lies with the learner as no one can attend on his or her behalf. Although the department of education has a policy with regard to learners' school attendance, the problem which is faced by principals and educators is its practical implementation. As the policy of the department aims at encouraging regular learner school attendance rather than to punish learners for non-attendance, learners usually play with policies and beat the system. Problems relating to school performance and the school attendance of learners in the Northern Province seem to be closely related to the social relation of society and the school, i.e. they seem to reflect the community, family or societal background. Dreeben (1968:2) argues that:

“... the school constitutes a component of a larger network of social institutions that includes the family ... it represents a link not only between successive phases of the life cycle between the private realm of the family and the larger public domain.”

The child, being a learner and a member of the larger society and the family, is probably influenced by both the family and society. Learner school attendance in the Northern Province cannot be devoid from the influence of both the family and society *per se*. Bowles and Gintis (1976:143)

assert that:

“There is a tendency for families to reproduce in their offspring not only a consciousness tailored to the objective nature of the work world, but to prepare them for economic positions roughly comparable to their own.”

School attendance in the Northern Province can be linked to the hierarchical societal classes whereby poor school attendance is very common amongst the working class learners than the middle class learners. The counter-school culture which is characterised by indiscipline and opposition to school authority as developed by the working class learners, usually discourages regular school attendance by its members as they argue that nothing valuable is done at school. The “lads” (Willis 1977:27) argue that:

“... of a Monday afternoon, we'd have nothing right? Nothing hardly relating to school work, Tuesday afternoon we have swimming and they stick you in a classroom for the rest of the afternoon, Wednesday afternoon you have games and there's only Thursday and Friday afternoon that you work, if you call that work. The last lesson Friday afternoon we used to go and doss, half of us wagged out o' lessons and the other half go into the classroom, sit down and just go to sleep...”

Poor school attendance of the working class learners together with their ill-discipline in the classroom and opposition to authority result in the working class cultural pattern of failure which perpetuates the working class cycle.

Poor school attendance by learners in some communities in the Northern Province can be linked to ongoing ritualistic practices that impact on school activities (McLaren 1986, 1993). These cultural practices and performances which are passed on from one generation to another, silently oppose regular school attendance. Ideologies, born by such ritualistic practices and performances are very common among working class communities as compared to middle class communities. Although such practices are mainly organised by parents, individual parents end up having very little influence or control over them since they are firmly rooted in rituals, idol worship and cultural identity with regard to *manhood* or *motherhood*. These cultural practices which tend to be a cultural heritage, are rarely discussed by parents, learners or educators as they are regarded as cultural secrets although they form a very strong counter-school culture. McLaren (1993:3) argues:

“In order for the educators to speak intelligibly and tellingly about human behaviour in a school milieu, the concept of ritual needs to be examined in all its complexity and multiplicity; moreover, it must be reconsidered and re-examined from a different theoretical starting point.”

Some ritual and cultural activities like initiation schools start during the school holidays as they target learners but extend to school days while some occur on weekends and engage the learners to the extent that they cannot spend a minute on studies. The success of these rituals and cultural activities depend mainly on the involvement of secondary school learners, particularly the grade 11 and 12 learners. Learner absenteeism, which is caused by attendance of cultural activities, is rarely questioned by schools due to the fear that is born of ritualistic belief.

Poor school attendance by learners in some communities in the Northern Province can be linked to cultural domination and political power since some of the activities are organised by various government officials which mainly target secondary school learners as their audience and attendance. Due to poor attendance by parents and as parents attendance cannot always be guaranteed, most of the government departments and officials use secondary schools or venues which are very close to schools as a way of targeting learners and also as a way of guaranteeing good attendance of their planned activities.

Poor school attendance in some communities in the Northern Province can be linked to economic reproduction which is in the form of a monthly child grant whereby girls who have children and who are not married have a monthly income. While such grants are an important means of living and while in some cases are they only means of family income, such grants are usually paid out during school hours. This results in young unmarried mothers absenting themselves from school in order to receive the child grant. While young mothers absent themselves from school to receive the child grant, many other learners also absent themselves from school as they are entrusted with the responsibility of accompanying their parents to the pension pay-stations to receive their pension money. Since these pensions are usually the only source of income for the whole family, educators find it difficult to stop such practices.

As education is viewed as the transmission of cultural knowledge (McLaren 1993:25) in the Northern Province, the cultural practices of the dominant group, i.e. blacks, were mainly neglected by the school curriculum due to the long-standing history of the apartheid government. Even today, there is still a wide gap between cultural practices and school curriculum, hence the ongoing counter-school culture and its impact on school attendance.

In some communities, learner absenteeism is associated with the socio-economic conditions of the families. As most of the learners come from poverty-stricken communities which are poorly resourced and as most of the learners come from families where one or both parents are unemployed or poorly remunerated, absenteeism becomes the only way of supplementing the family's income. Some learners are entrusted with the task of caring for the families, including caring for their younger sisters and brothers as parents are employed far away from the home. Some learners, particularly girls, are single mothers who have the responsibility of caring for their children while attending school. While few learners can voice their real problems, the majority of the learners are shy to communicate their problems as they do not want to expose their family conditions. As most of the learners have valid reasons of absenting themselves, it is clear that schools alone are unable to stamp out learner absenteeism. Educators, learners, parents and the state should join hands in fighting learner absenteeism, lest a cycle of ongoing poverty and unemployment is perpetuated. If the basic services of the rural communities can be addressed, e.g. an adequate supply of water, electricity, etc., the school attendance of learners can undoubtedly be improved drastically.

6.8 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND PUNCTUALITY OF LEARNERS DURING LESSONS

It has been revealed that schools where learners are punctual at lessons tend to perform better than schools which have poor punctuality. Punctuality, being a condition for any successful learning and teaching, needs to be observed at all times as it affects the learners' life at school and their future life. Although the Northern Province Department of Education has directed schools to develop a mechanism of stamping out the tardiness of both learners and educators, and although schools have policies of controlling punctuality, the tardiness of learners is still a serious problem in most schools.

Although timetabling is a common feature of all schools, the observance of the timetable by both learners and educators differs from school to school, learner to learner and educator to educator. While in most schools timetabling is reinforced by clocks, bells and sirens, the differences between schools, learners and educators is mainly how they transit from the clock time, bells and sirens to the inner time (Berkhout & Bergh 1994:53; McLaren 1986:94). As clocks, bells and sirens cannot activate learners' or educators' movements against their will, the main difference between schools is the meaning attached to bells, clocks, and sirens. Berkhout and Bergh (1994:53) argue that:

“Ringing bells and changing between classes require certain physical and mental actions from students ... This transition from clock time to inner time and vice versa requires mental and emotional energy...”

While some of the factors which lead to tardiness can be attributed to learners, there are some factors which need parental and community involvement.

Problems relating to the punctuality of learners at lessons affirm how structural forces outside the school can impact on the functioning of the school *per se*. Apple (1995) affirms how the structural forces outside the school are interwoven and impact on the functioning of the school by focussing on the cultural and economic productive and distributive functions of the school. Apple (1995:41) asserts that:

“... there is an interplay, one that is quite complex, between the school’s role in the production of agents for the social division of labor ... and the school’s place as a mode of production of cultural capital.”

Most of the problems relating to punctuality can be linked to the rural nature of families and communities and their societal classes. Being the poorest of all the provinces with very few industries, the Northern Province, and particularly its schools, are less exposed and less influenced by industrial life which demands punctuality among its workers (Bowles & Gintis 1976:143). As learners are less motivated to prepare themselves for an higher economic status, they are influenced to prepare themselves for family and community functions which accommodate delays and tardiness.

Willis (1977) affirms the school’s role in the reproduction of agents for the social division of labour as he reflects on how the middle class learners get middle class jobs while the working class learners get working class jobs. Although both middle class and working class learners may attend same school and receive the same tuition in the same class, the working class learners exclude themselves from the dominant school culture by forming a working class counter-school culture (Willis 1977:27) which is characterized by informal student mobility which can take the form of truancy or poor punctuality at lessons. Willis argues that:

“Some of the lads develop the ability of moving about the school at their own will

to a remarkable degree ... being free out of class, being in class doing no work, being in the wrong class, roaming the corridors looking for excitement, being asleep in private.”

The counter-school culture, which includes poor punctuality at lessons, results in poor performance or even failure of the working class learners which channel them to working class jobs.

As conditions and factors which cause tardiness vary from school to school and from place to place, educators, learners, parents and the community as a whole should seek effective ways of addressing this problem.

6.9 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND LEARNER ATTENDANCE OF AFTERNOON STUDIES

As revealed by this research project, schools which have good learner attendance at afternoon studies tend to perform better than schools which have poor or no afternoon studies. The principal, learners, educators and school governing body have to determine the times of the school day in such a way that afternoon studies will be accommodated.

Although the reasons for not having afternoon studies are many and varied, compulsory afternoon studies have to be introduced by all secondary schools in order to create a conducive learning environment which would allow any learner to study with minimal disturbances.

In view of the fact that the Northern Province is almost 97% rural, most of the learners come from working class rural homes which are characterized by child labour and a lack of basic learning facilities and services. Schools tend to be the only conducive learning environment available, hence the importance of learner attendance at afternoon studies.

While acknowledging numerous factors, e.g. internal and external factors which make the attendance at afternoon studies by learners almost impossible, educators as official timekeepers have a responsibility of creating favourable conditions for learners to attend afternoon studies. Jackson (1990:12) asserts that:

“he decides ... whether those who take the bus may be dismissed. In many schools he is assisted in this job by an elaborate system of bells and buzzers.”

Afternoon study attendance cannot be separated from school attendance. Schools which have poor school attendance tend to have poor afternoon study attendance. Afternoon study attendance and school attendance can be linked to hierarchical societal classes. Working class learners tend to have more problems in attending afternoon studies than the middle class learners due to *inter alia*, poor socio-economic conditions of their homes which make afternoon study attendance difficult. The counter-school culture of working class learners exhibits itself mainly in poor attendance of afternoon studies (Willis 1977).

6.10 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND ENJOYMENT IN HEADING THE SCHOOL

Research has shown that schools in which principals enjoy their calling tend to perform better than schools in which their principals do not enjoy their calling, i.e. the principals' enjoyment in leading the school impacts on school performance. Jackson (1990:74) argues that:

“The person who enters a situation feeling generally satisfied with the condition in which he finds himself is more likely than is his disgruntled companion to cope successfully with the specific demands of that situation.”

As scholastic success engenders positive attitudes toward school, i.e. enhancing the possibility for further success, it impacts positively on the learners', educators' and principals' satisfaction or enjoyment.

In recognition that the principals of schools which perform poorly do not simply choose not to enjoy heading their schools nor choose not to perform well, it is necessary to determine the reasons which make them not enjoy their work. Although the reasons are many and varied, the basic problem is probably a failure to perform as expected. Failure to perform as expected by the department of education and the public as a whole, breeds many other problems, including disciplinary problems. The school as a social institution has to comply with the public expectation which includes, *inter alia*, good learner performance at the end of the year.

While the principal's enjoyment in heading the school impacts positively on the school

performance, good school performance becomes an end in itself and for its own sake. Geen (1995:120) asserts that:

“If a person has a high level of achievement motivation - that is, if he or she values achievement for its own sake - the competence at a task will be highly valued even if no reward is given.”

Good learner performance tends to motivate educators, learners, principals and all the stakeholders to work harder than before while poor performance can discourage them to make any effort to improve performance. As a lack of enjoyment in heading the school can easily degenerate into a lack of interest and a negative attitude in heading the school, principals which perform poorly need to be supported to the extent that they can view themselves as possible good achievers.

Instead of labelling the schools which perform poorly with derogatory names like “dysfunctional, hall of shame schools”, instead of threatening the principals of such schools with demotion or transfer (Northern Province Department of Education 2000:13) some intervening strategies and programmes need to be developed to place such schools at a level which can make them perform well. A programme of action support needs to be developed which will assist performance, challenge schools to set realistic and attainable goals and to constantly evaluate their progress towards the set goals.

A lack of enjoyment in heading the school and poor school performance should not be attributed solely to poor school management techniques or personality attributes of the principal without taking cognizance of the numerous factors which can impact on the school as a whole.

6.11 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND PARENTAL SUPPORT

As revealed by this research project, schools which are well supported by parents tend to perform better than schools which are not well supported by parents. Parents need to be encouraged to play a meaningful role in the education of their children. Parents have to be urged to support educators in the performance of their professional tasks as educators undertake the socialisation and caring services of their children for a larger proportion of the daily period. Lynch (1989:30) asserts that:

“Because schools undertake the socialization of all children for a larger proportion of their waking-day, parents (of all classes and genders) are freed from the responsibilities of caring for them. They can pursue work or leisure...”

Although Lynch argues that parents are freed from their responsibilities of caring for their children during school time, this does not mean that they are freed from all their responsibilities with regard to their children’s needs and education as educators’ services cannot replace all the parental responsibilities. Although educators daily spend a large proportion with learners, parents may not dump their responsibilities (Gatto 1992) in the hands of educators by virtue of being subject experts as parental services cannot be confined to school subjects.

Poor parental recognition and poor parental involvement in school activities can probably be linked to, *inter alia*, a high level of parent illiteracy and a lack of capacity in school governance matters which are very common amongst the working class parents.

Differences in parental support seem to reflect and reproduce the differential literacy class structure which is further reinforced by inequalities in financial resources. Bowles and Gintis (1976:133) argue that:

“The well-financed school attended by the children of the rich can offer much greater opportunities for the development of the capacity for sustained independent work...”

Although parents may not concern themselves with the trivial activities of the school, and though they may not be involved with actual classroom teaching, they have to be actively involved in the education of their children, which includes governance of schools and other support services.

Parents as primary care-givers of children and as the prime resource of the education of learners should be recognised, empowered and encouraged to be fully involved in the education of their children.

6.12 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND THE COMPLETION OF THE SYLLABI

This research project has indicated that there is a correlation between the period in which educators complete their syllabi and the performance of learners. Schools which have educators who complete their syllabi in good time tend to produce better results than schools which have educators who complete their syllabi at the last minute.

While acknowledging the unavoidable crowded nature of the classroom with its features, viz. delay, denial, interruption and social distraction (Jackson 1990:17), educators as official timekeepers have a responsibility of scheduling school activities in accordance with the given and available time. Jackson (1990:13) asserts:

“... that school is a place where things often happen not because students want them to, but because it is time for them to occur.”

Failure to complete the syllabi at the right time can be attributed to various factors, including the failure of educators of pre-matric classes to complete the syllabi. Failure of the pre-matric class educators to complete the syllabi results in a future learning barrier as learners will be expected to master the content of the matric subjects without having the necessary background.

Other factors which result in the failure of educators to complete the syllabi are poor lesson attendance by both educators and learners, a lack of supporting materials or other resources, failure of educators to master the subject content, etc. In order to complete the syllabi in good time, both educators' and learners' activities need to be controlled and directed towards a specific goal, viz. the good performance of learners. Cusick (1973:208) asserts that:

“Combined, these previously mentioned characteristics (batch processing, etc.) need yet another reinforcer in order to operate effectively. They need routinization of activity so that both teachers and students will know where to go and when to go there.”

Routinization, i.e. timetabling, permeates the whole school system and continually affects the lives of educators and learners (notwithstanding its unintended effects like fragmentation of the school

day into a series of unrelated events which result in the alienation of the learner from his/her world) is stifling learners' creativity as ideas do not get time to develop and is depriving learners of the possibility of playing an active role in society. Gatto (1992:30) argues that:

“But these activities are just a more cosmetic way to create dependent human beings, unable to fill their own hours, unable to initiate lines of meaning to give substance and pleasure to their existence. It's a national disease, this dependency and aimlessness...”

This study has revealed that while all schools have clocks or bells or sirens which reinforces timetables in controlling the school activities with the ultimate aim of completing the syllabi in good time, the main difference between schools is the meaning attached to the bells, clocks and sirens. This results in schools which perform well completing the syllabi in good time while schools which perform poorly fail to complete the syllabi in good time.

6.13 CONCLUSION

It had been found that differential school performance in the South African school leaving examination in the northern Province can be viewed against the background of both the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum. Besides learning from the formal curriculum, learners learn from the structures of attitude, discipline and parental support.

This study has revealed that differential school performance can be partly attributed to the impact of the hidden curriculum through attitudes as learners learn from the structures of attitude towards schooling, i.e. schools where there is a high expectation of the final results, where principals enjoy heading their schools and identify themselves fully with the performance of their learners tend to perform better than schools where the above mentioned are either poor or absent. It has further been revealed that while learners and educators of the good performing schools are aware of their good performance and put more efforts to improve their performance, learners and educators of poor performing schools are not aware of their poor performance, hence, further poor performance which affect their entire lives.

REFERENCES

Differential school performance can be partly attributed to the impact of the hidden curriculum through discipline as research has indicated that learners learn from the structures of discipline. It has been revealed that schools which have good discipline, i.e. good learner school attendance, good afternoon study attendance, where learners are punctual at lessons and where the syllabi is completed in good time tend to perform better than schools where the above mentioned are either poor or absent. It has been revealed further that differential disciplinary patterns of schools and differences in learner performances can probably be linked to the social and economic class structures whereby the working class learners exclude themselves from the dominant school culture by forming a working class counter-school culture.

Differential school performance can probably be linked to the impact of the hidden curriculum through parental support. Research has indicated that learners learn from the structures of parental support, i.e. financial support, involvement in school governance, school meeting attendance, etc. This study has revealed that schools which are well supported by parents tend to perform better than schools which are not well supported. Poor parental support and poor parental involvement in school activities can probably be linked to a high level of parent illiteracy and a lack of capacity in school governance matters which are very common amongst the working class parents.

6.13.1 Further research

The investigation of the possible impact of the hidden curriculum on the South African school leaving examination in the Northern Province has revealed a need for continuous research to investigate its possible impact on learner performance. This study should not be seen as a once-off exercise but should be viewed as an investigation-in-progress. The hidden curriculum cannot be studied as a static phenomenon with the same fixed patterns or characteristics but should be viewed as a time-bound and place-bound changing phenomenon which needs continuous re-visiting.

As this study has used the quantitative research method for data collection, analysis and interpretation, qualitative research is needed to provide more information with regard to patterns, the relationship or correlation of variables which seem to impact on the learners' performance in the school leaving examination in the Northern Province.