The relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership in historically disadvantaged African township secondary schools: implications for leadership

BY

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DECLARATION

I, **THANDI MOIRA NGCOBO** of the FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL, declare that the copy of this thesis submitted by me on 08 February, 2005 is original. It has not previously been submitted for evaluation at another university, faculty, or department and is not being submitted concurrently for any other degree. It is the result of my effort through the professional guidance of my supervisor and co-supervisor whose names and signatures appear below.

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ABSTRACT

The present government places tremendous faith in academic performance as a crucial tool for transforming the country's society. However, academic performance in the majority of historically disadvantaged schools is poor. What this means is that these schools are hardly in a position to contribute to this hoped for transformation. This is despite the numerous policies generated by the government in an effort to improve the performance. Underpinning this study was a view that this is because the policies do not address issues that are foundational for academic performance. One such issue, as indicated by widespread findings, is school culture, and associated leadership. In response to this view, an examination was in this study conducted on the relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership in two historically disadvantaged African township secondary schools (HDATSS). The purpose was to develop better understanding of school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS, and, in the process, develop better understanding of leadership associated with the formation of such school cultures. The examination was conducted by means of ethnography. The advantage of ethnography for this study was that the methodology results in micro/thick descriptions more likely to inform practice than is the case with thin descriptions provided by other methodologies.

Findings were that school cultures that are most likely to enable good academic performance in HDATSS are those that are predominantly communal in nature, but also incorporate societal features. Of particular advantage about communality for the schools' academic performance are common, consensual understandings in relation to the schools' academic goals and behavioural norms. Of advantage about the societal incorporation, on the other hand, is societal capacity to compensate for communality's failure to negotiate common understandings in organizations that are as complex, ever-changing and multifaceted as are HDATSS. It was further found that for such school cultures to be enabling for HDATSS they need to creatively supplement historical deprivations and reflect the cultural backgrounds of the schools' populations. A style of leadership that

was found to be associated with the formation of such school cultures is that which emerges organically and is therefore diffused, serving and diversified.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis reports on a study that examined the relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership in historically disadvantaged African township secondary schools (HDATSS). The aim was to develop better understanding of school cultures that promise to enable good academic performance in HDATSS and, in the process, develop better understanding of leadership implications for the formation of such school cultures. To achieve these outcomes, an ethnographic study was conducted on two sample schools of varying academic performance: Fundiseka Comprehensive High School and Umzamo High School. The former was sampled for its good academic performance with the latter sampled on the basis of its poor academic performance. The decision to study schools of varying academic performance was prompted by a conviction that a comparison of the schools' cultures and associated leadership would help expose issues related to the concepts that promise to be enabling for the majority of HDATSS. It is important to point out at this stage that the focus on the relationships between academic performance and school culture and between school culture and school leadership was not prompted by a 'cause and effect' assumption on the relationships. Instead, the view was that school culture plays an important role in providing contexts that either enable or disable engagements in activities that may result in good academic performance for particular communities and that, in the same way, school leadership relates differently to particular contexts.

The key questions

The following key questions guided the development of the desired understanding of school cultures, and associated leadership, that support good academic performance in HDATSS:

* What forms of culture and leadership exist in the sample schools of varying performance?

* What features of school cultures are enabling with respect to academic performance in HDATSS?

* What forms of leadership are associated with school cultures that enable good academic performance at the schools?

The main purpose of the questions was that they would promote identification of what might be argued to be the most significant implications for leadership regarding the creation of school cultures that enable good academic performance in historically disadvantaged African township secondary schools.

Background to the study

A substantial number of South Africa's historically disadvantaged schools have for some time been plagued by poor academic performance, as reflected by poor matriculation examination results at the secondary school level. Indicative of the poor performance at the primary school level have been poor scores in tests such as the TIMMS–R tests on Mathematics and Science; GTZ 3 tests on Numeric and Literacy; JET Grade 3 and Grade 6 tests on Numeric and Reading; MLA on Numeric, Literacy and Life Skills and JET (QLP) and Eric Scholar tests on Mathematics, Reading and Writing (Taylor, et. al, 2003). These publicly acknowledged poor performances have been prompting post 1994 education ministries to initiate policies aimed at 'improving the quality of the learning experiences in schools and classrooms' (Taylor, et al, 2003). One such policy was the so-called 'Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service' (COLTS) programme. Also forming part of the policies were collaborative initiatives with Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as the 'Toyota Teach' programme and the Shell-initiated 'Centre for Advanced Science and Mathematics Education' (CASME).

Even though recent matriculation pass rates might be seen to imply that new policies are succeeding in achieving their desired effects, certain issues cast doubts on the alleged improvements. The presumed increases do not, for example, take into account decreased matriculation candidature resulting from high drop-out and failure rates in preceding classes, as suggested by the figures in Tables 1 and 2 below. Whilst figures

in Table 1 show increasing pass rates over the 1999-2002 periods in all of the six districts of the North Durban Region, the figures in Table 2 show decreasing numbers of students writing matriculation examinations in all of the six districts over the same period.

Table 1: MATRICULATION PASS RATES: NORTH DURBAN – 1999 to 2002

	City of Dbn	Phoenix	Ndwedwe	Inanda	KwaMashu	Maphumulo	Region
1999	73,65	70	56,76	34,53	36,04	26,14	57,2
2000	85,15	74	57	46,83	47,45	35,37	64,81
2001	5,33	82,16	66,73	57,88	55,24	46,12	70,11
20002	91,47	87,2	71,8	63,77	63,4	58,39	76,04

Table 2: NUMBER OF STUDENTS WRITING MATRICULATION XAMINATIONS: NORTH DURBAN – 1999 to 2002

	City of Dbn	Phoenix	Ndwedwe	Inanda	KwaMashu	Maphumulo	Region
1999	6,966	3,744	2 ,003	1,607	2,799	2,127	19,246
2000	6,739	3,766	2,037	1,468	2,361	1,938	18,309
2001	6,779	3,033	1,840	1,499	2,164	1,754	17,069
2002	6,730	3,523	1,909	1,553	2,411	1,896	18,022

What claims that results are improving do not take into consideration are the manipulation of matriculation results through the so-called 'gate-keeping' practice s in schools themselves. A seemingly widespread strategy is for schools to promote

only a very small number of Grade 11s to the Grade 12 class. Such highly selected groups of students do much to improve the overall pass rate in terms of percentages. These manipulations assist schools in avoiding closures threatened by the national Department of Education. The threat was that schools failing to meet set minimum pass rates, which in 2002 stood at 40%, would be closed. Providing a good example of the 'gate-keeping' practice was the sample school selected for the present study on the basis of its poor academic performance. While the school's 2002 Grade 11 class enrolment had stood at 200 students, only 10 of these students were promoted into the 2003 Grade 12 class. As a result, the school recorded a pass rate of 90% in 2003 as opposed to its 2002 pass rate of 18%. This more than 70% 'increase' was possible only because nine of the ten students had managed to 'scrape through' the examination. Further putting a damper on the view that the 'increase' constituted 'improvement' is that only one of the nine successes was a university exemption pass.

That the 'gate keeping' practice has acquired a label suggests that it is not only widespread, but also that it has been in existence for quite some time. Other widespread claims relating to 'gate-keeping' are that some schools recording improved matriculation results achieve this by registering as private candidates those Grade 12s not regarded as guaranteed pass material. Also raising suspicions over the genuineness of improvements are increasing numbers of schools whose matriculation examination results record 'improvements' that exceed 50% over a period of just one year. Further feeding doubts about the true nature of 'improvements' the fact that such increases are mostly short-lived and tend to see-saw from one extreme to another over consecutive years. Appendices 1 and 2 provide examples of such see-sawing.

Historical educational disadvantage

Contributing to the poor academic performance of HDATSS is historical educational disadvantage resulting from the stipulations of The Bantu Education Act of 1953. These stipulations were a response to the Eiselen Commission's 1952 recommendations on Native Education that education provisioning for African communities was not to be of the same quality as that of other racial groups (Horrel, 1984, Hartshorne, 1999; Kallaway, 2002 and Soudien, 2002). The Act brought to an end an education hitherto provided mostly by Christian missionaries and, to a lesser

extent, by provincial Departments of Education, and which the communities had valued and perceived as of superior quality school to centralised 'Bantu Education (Hartshorne, 1999).

'Bantu Education' was perceived as so inferior that the financially 'able' sectors of the African communities responded by seeking alternatives rather than subject their dependants to its provisioning. Some did this by 'shipping' their dependants either to schools in neighbouring independent African states such as Swaziland, Botswana and Lesotho, or to Christian missionary boarding schools within the borders of the country (Horrel, 1984). A certain section of the community adopted non-African surnames and registered themselves as 'Coloureds' in order to facilitate the entry of their offspring into legally 'Coloured' schools.

The largest section of the community could not afford the alternatives and, as a result, settled for the 'Bantu Education'. Some degree of 'culture of learning and teaching' did, however, exist in most of the schools: most students registered at the schools went to classes as expected, while the teachers similarly taught the prescribed syllabuses as expected. This situation continued until overtaken by the Soweto Riots that erupted in June 16, 1976 and that continued into the early 1990s. This period of flagrant student resistance began in defiance to the then recently promulgated policy prescribing Afrikaans as a medium of instruction for all Black secondary schools. The uprising youths vandalised township school buildings and local education offices and attacked the schools' teachers and the local education officers (Hartshorne, ibid). South African education was never to be the same again. So significant were the riots that June 16 stands as a public holiday, Youth Day, in commemoration of the changes brought about by the struggle and the lives lost through the struggle.

The spilling over of the riots into subsequent years found both learners and educators questioning the whole of the education system, including the legitimacy of education managers. The latter situation made it very difficult for school managers to exercise a form of leadership that would bring about the kind of school cultures that support teaching and learning. As a result, teaching and learning in township schools fell into a decline so drastic that some parents began searching for alternatives that would provide 'better' education within their areas of residence. One such alternative was

the 'People's Education', founded in 1985 by the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) (Cape Teachers' Professional Association, 1988). This project brought together political, educational, trade union, parent, teacher and student leadership in a search of 'a possible alternative mechanism for running schools and continuing with some form of education' (Hartshorne, 1987: 5). Of central concern for the project members was the setting up of a 'free, compulsory, unitary system of education' which would stimulate critical and creative thinking among Africans (op cit).

Also constituting efforts at improving the education of disadvantaged communities were research undertakings. Two such undertakings were a study by Nxumalo (1993), and one by The Committee on The Culture of Learning and Teaching (1996) commissioned by the Gauteng Department of Education. The former surveyed educators', learners' and parents' perceptions of what they considered to be barriers to the 'culture of learning' in KwaMashu schools whilst the latter researched the culture of learning in Gauteng schools. Both projects found that the sampled historically disadvantaged communities attributed the loss of the culture of learning and teaching to:

* lack and/or shortage of resources;
* poor subject knowledge and instruction on the part of teachers;
* shortage of teachers with specialized subject expertise (e.g. science);
* lack of discipline; low morale; corrupt, uninspiring, uncommitted and fearful teachers;
* ineffective principals;
* poor communication between learners and parents;
* lack of parental support;
* social breakdown; poor conditions of employment for educators;
* conflict among personnel and between personnel and students;
* 'overcrowding' and lack of security.

Striking about the findings was that both studies reported that disabling school cultures and ineffective leadership were variously perceived to be at the centre of the loss of the culture of learning and teaching.

Post 1994 teaching and learning policy interventions

Of immediate concern to the democratic government when it came to power in 1994 was a national reconstruction it hoped to achieve through education. As a result, the government's national education department immediately set about introducing policies aimed at transforming the education system to meet the challenge. Doubts about the appropriateness and effectiveness of ensuing policies abound. For Hartshorne (1999) the inappropriateness began with the oft-cited 'improvement' concept. The author's view is that the term 'improvement' does not begin to do justice to governments' proposed education changes. His view is that the term 'educational transformation' is a more appropriate description of the educational changes with which the government has been hoping to transform the education system so it could serve 'the interest of all South Africans in a democratic and equitable manner' (Hartshorne, 1999: 11).

Even though the priority of the post 1994 national Department of Education 'proved to be the issues surrounding the governance, organization, and funding of schools' (Hartshorne (1999: 112), the department also displayed immediate awareness of the importance of school culture for transforming education through improved academic performance. Serving to illustrate this was the department's establishment in 1995 of a programme it referred to as the *Culture of Learning* (COL) and which later came to be known as the *Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (COLTS)*. The aim of the programme was to 'raise the visibility of the problem of dysfunctional education institutions' (Status Report for the Minister of Education – June 1999: 15) and 'demonstrate, within a short period of time, substantive changes to the culture of learning in South African schools' (The Report of the Team of National Evaluation: Culture Of Learning Programme, 1996: 16-17). Some educationists are convinced that COLTS succeeded in achieving what it set out to achieve, claiming that:

> Despite problems such as a lack of common understanding about the causes of violence, COLTS has contributed towards the normalization of a positive educational culture, especially in township schools. On the whole, the introduction of COLTS has facilitated and invigorated the culture of learning and teaching in schools where chaos and disruptions were the order of the day.
> (CEPD, EPU Wits, EPU Natal, EPU Fort Hare, 2002: 28).

However, the same report also challenges its own perception by pointing out that, despite the positive spin-offs, 'one aspect of teaching (teacher motivation and morale) has been ignored ...' (op cit). Other challenges to COLTS' success included report findings by the team commissioned to evaluate the impact of COL programme on education transformation (1996) and the Status Report for the Minster of Education (June 1999). The commission found that although the programme had benefited some schools, it had failed to penetrate the majority of historically disadvantaged schools. Furthermore, although the COLTS campaign had been designed to run for three years in the expectation that its message would have been institutionalised by 1999, its failed implementation had meant that the campaign needed to be extended beyond the proposed period (Status Report for the Minster of Education – June 1999). Also pointing to the failure of the project was that the campaign had not succeeded in achieving its main objective of:

> Community involvement in restoring a sense of professional responsibility among those educators who have lost their professional self-respect, ... using learners to make disciplined use of their opportunity to study, ... combating crime and violence in schools, and ... ensuring that officials in education departments exemplify the service of ethic.
> (Status Report for the Minister June, 1999: 15)

Rationale for the study

Prompting focus on academic performance in HDATSS was, as already implied, not only the continued poor performance at the schools but also the implications of the poor performance for national reconstruction. Focus on school culture and associated leadership itself was brought about by a conviction that the two hold the key to solving the problem of poor academic performance at the schools. Leading to this conviction were findings by numerous studies that 'healthy and sound school culture correlates strongly with increased student achievement and motivation and with teacher productivity and satisfaction' (Stolp, 1994: 1-2) (see also Beare, 1989; Bennis, 1989b; Torrington and Weightman, 1993; Stolp, 1994; Hargreaves, 1995; Christie, 1997, Malcolm, 1999 and Prosser, 1999). What studies have also been finding is that critical to the development and maintenance of school cultures is school leadership

(see for example, Schein, 1985; Russel, 1994 Stolp, 1994; Elmore, 2001; and Lumby, 2003). A conclusion drawn from the findings is that 'by deepening their understanding of school culture, ... leaders will be better equipped to shape the values, beliefs, and attitudes necessary to promote a stable and nurturing learning environment' (Stolp, ibid, 1).

Also contributing to the conviction was the fact that some HDATSS do perform well academically despite their historical disadvantages. This led to an assumption that academic excellence in disadvantaged schools needs to be further sought out in sources other than learning materials and physical structures. Further fuelling the stand were findings of poor performance in some well-resourced Black schools. An example of such findings were by survey conducted by the Fort Hare University's Institute of Governance on academic performance of the well resourced 'Madiba schools' in the Eastern Cape, for which ex-president Nelson Mandela had secured funding. The findings of the survey were that the schools were performing badly despite being 'adequately' resourced materially and also despite being staffed by teachers in possession of the required levels of teacher certification (Bennett in The Teacher, October, 2001).

However, despite this undisputed link between academic performance, school culture and school leadership, there is a surprising lacuna of research in this field both internationally (Russell, 1994 and Elmore, 2001) and locally. Pointing to the latter, amongst other things, is that only sixteen of the multiple educational projects that received financial support from the National Research Foundation (NRF) during 1994 - 2003 focused on school culture. Also, although 200 studies financed by the same foundation during the same period focused on school leadership, none linked school leadership to school culture and academic performance (http://stardarta.nrf.ac.za/index.html). This gap in the research is of great concern considering the desperate need for such inputs for historically disadvantaged schools.

Further fuelling the conviction that the area of focus in this study holds the key to the solution of poor academic performance plaguing historically disadvantaged schools were class discussions, as an education management lecturer at a College of Education in the late 1980s and currently at a university, with students that teach in

HDATSS. The discussions reveal dissatisfaction with the 'way things are done' at the students' schools and with the forms of leadership associated with such cultures.

Taking a cue from the above, the researcher sought to identify individuals who contributed to and sustained school cultures in historically disadvantaged African schools. The intention was to study the individuals' practices in order to identify and develop an understanding of the behaviours and meanings that impact positively on the everyday realities, perspectives, systems and life patterns of the schools' populations. It was hoped that this would enable insights into features of school culture and leadership associated with learning and teaching in such contexts and also assist identify and gain insights into leadership behaviours associated with the formation of such school cultures.

In summary, the study was prompted by a desire to contribute towards the understanding that is necessary if we are to reverse the impact of the country's legacies directly on academic performance, and indirectly on the whole education of the country's historically disadvantaged communities. It was hoped that the findings would be of benefit and of interest to researchers as well as to both practitioners and policy makers concerned with improving academic performance of schools serving these communities.

Arguments underpinning this study therefore were that:

- for academic performances to improve in HDATSS the schools' cultures need be enabling to the schools' populations.
- the formation of potentially enabling cultures at the schools can only occur if the schools' leadership is enabling to the formation of such cultures.

Theoretical framework

Framing the study was a conception that social processes, including those of central focus in this study, namely, culture and leadership, hardly fall into neat compact boxes. The framing conception therefore was that any attempt at exploring the

processes from unilateral perspectives would deny full understanding. As a result, this study was informed by an eclectic, relativist, contingent and grounded theoretical framework, as summarized below and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Conception of 'truth' and human nature

Eclecticism permeated all levels of the research, namely: the ontological; the epistemological; the view of human nature; and the resulting methodology. Ontologically, this meant that even though basically underpinned by a nominal perspective, the perspective also encompassed realism. The argument was that even though it is consciousness and cognition that serve to give meaning to human behaviour, given behaviours actually occur 'out there' independently of consciousness and cognition. What this meant in relation to this study was that even though culture and leadership are constructed social realities that are construed differently by different researchers and participants, failure to strive for some objectivity with respect to the concepts reduces integrity and credibility. This reasoning resulted in triangulated data collection in the study.

The above eclectic ontology spilled over into the epistemological underpinnings of this study. As a result, although basically anti-positivist, the epistemology framing the study also incorporated some positivism. Bringing this about was a belief that even though humans are complex beings whose behaviour is not governed by universal laws but by underpinning meanings and values, some form of universality does govern the behaviour to some degree. For example, even though leadership perception differs from individual to individual and from group to group, some form of leadership influences individual/group behaviour. As a result, even though human behaviour cannot be comprehended fully through empirical means, some of its aspects need to be examined empirically if some degree of generalization is to be achieved. This viewpoint made it necessary to begin the examination of leadership in the sample schools by identifying the schools' leadership by means of a questionnaire. This tool offered some generalization at least with regard to precisely who constituted the schools' leadership. An in-depth understanding of what factors and criteria lay behind perceptions as to who the leaders were was then conducted through 'subjective' tools, namely: interviews and observations.

Also constituting the eclectic underpinnings to the study was a viewpoint that even though humans exercise their free will to create and respond to their environments, some 'universal' conditionings determine mechanistic response to 'situations encountered in their external world' (Cohen, et al, 2000: 7).

Research methodology: ethnography and grounded theory

In line with the above theoretical framework, the methodology by means of which this study was conducted was relativist and underpinned by a pragmatism that sought to generate a theory grounded on collected data rather than on advance hypotheses. Resulting from this conception was a decision to study two sample schools of varying academic performance by means of ethnography.

Conceptual framework

In line with the above theoretical framework was a conceptual framework that was basically eclectic and contingent. The thinking was that none of the cultural or leadership conceptualizations and theories provides comprehensive and universal answers independently of contexts and purposes. This made it necessary to pave the way for data collection and analysis with clarification of concepts that were central in this study. An overview of conceptualizations underpinning the study is provided below. A fuller discussion of the issue is presented in Chapter 2.

While academic performance was traditionally conceptualized as mere acquisitioning of basic skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic and rote learning, newer versions extend the conceptualisation to include problem solving, application and creativity. This lack of agreement regarding what constitutes 'academic performance' makes it difficult to speak about the concept in general terms. This prompted a decision to base academic performance conceptualization for this study on the readily available matriculation results. Also leading to the choice of matriculation examination performance as a unit on which to base academic performance was that matriculation provides a standard in South Africa against which acceptance into further education and training and non-menial employment is measured. Implied by this is that

matriculation constitutes one of the educational starting points for the hoped for national reconstruction.

Culture was the other concept central in the study and therefore needed clarification before a methodology could be selected. Problematic about the activity was the multiple meanings given to the concept by its numerous scholars. Some of the scholars confine their conceptualisation to normative behaviours, for example, to 'the way we do things around here' (see for example, Deal and Kennedy, 1992). A second group of the scholars include beliefs and values into their conceptualizations (for example, Fuglestad and Lillejord, 2002) while scholars such as Schein (1995) feel such conceptualisations are incomplete and can only be to the point if they include assumptions. Schein's (op cit) view is that behaviour, beliefs, and values are all underpinned by assumptions. In line with Schein's conceptualization underpinning culture conceptualization in the study was a view that the concept refers to 'the sum total of the assumptions, beliefs, and values that its members share and is expressed through "what is done, how it is done, and who is doing it"' (Farmer, 1990 in Keup, et al., 2001:1). In addition, constituting school culture conceptualization in the study was Schein's (1985) view that the culture refers to 'accumulated shared learning of a given group, covering behavioural, emotional and cognitive elements of the group members' total psychological functioning' (cited by Lumby, 2003: 160).

The other concept that needed clarification was that of 'leadership'. Similar to culture, the concept holds diverse meanings for its scholars, resulting in confusion among practitioner and policy maker related activities. Traditionally, the concept was linked to official positions of authority, and a view that the concept was a preserve of individuals displaying a set of particular traits and behaviours. Framing leadership conceptualization in this study was a shift from this viewpoint to one that sees leadership basically as a capacity to influence the values, attitudes, and actions of others (Burns, 1978 and Owens 1998). Also framing the conceptualisation was that the view that the capacity is contingent to suitability of leadership behaviour to worker or follower characteristics (Fiedler, 1978). This shift has resulted in a conceptualization also adopted in the study of a view that leadership is not necessarily linked to positions of authority but is often dispersed throughout an organization and is at times shared amongst members not in such positions. Feeding this shift have

been research findings that effective organizations are characterized by flatter structures associated with dispersed leadership (see, for example Warketin, 1982; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Eisenhower, in Clemmer and McNeal, 1989; Bennett, 1991; Bryman, 1992; Coleman, 1994; Marriage, 1995; Turner, 1998; Russell, 2003, citing Hirschorn, 1997; and Gold, 2003).

Structure

The study is structured into three sections made up of eight chapters. Three chapters on conceptual, theoretical and methodological underpinnings into the study constitute the first section. Chapter 1, the 'Introduction', provides a brief preamble to the study while Chapter 2, titled 'Academic performance, school culture and school leadership', explores conceptualizations of, and theories on, the three concepts whose relationship was explored in the study. Chapter 3 concludes the section by discussing the 'Research design and process' of this study.

The second section of the presentation is in two chapters and provides descriptions of school cultures and leadership in the two sample schools of varying academic performances. Chapter 4 is titled 'Fundiseka school culture and leadership: enthusing negotiated communal ownership'. It describes the enabling school culture and associated leadership of the school sampled for its good academic performance. Titled 'Umzamo school culture and leadership: alienating fragmented understandings', Chapter 5 describes the disabling school culture and associated leadership of the school sampled for its poor academic performance.

The third and last section of the thesis consists of three chapters on deductions drawn from findings in theisstudy and which provide a basis for transferability and/or generalisability of the findings. Chapter 6 is titled 'School cultures for good academic performance in historically disadvantaged African township secondary schools: an emergent theory'. This chapter discusses school culture features, and an emergent theory, that promise to enable good academic performance in HDATSS. Chapter 7 is titled: 'Leadership implications for school cultures that enable good academic performance in historically disadvantaged African township secondary schools'. The

chapter discusses deductions drawn from findings in this study regarding leadership implications for the formation of school cultures that support good academic performance in HDATSS. The final chapter is titled 'Summary, conclusion and recommendations'. As implied in the title, the chapter summarises the study, presents conclusions drawn from the findings in this study, and offers recommendations for leadership practices and policies focused on the formation of school cultures that enable good academic performance in HDATSS.

CHAPTER TWO

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, SCHOOL CULTURE AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Literature reviewed in this study helped identify gaps in studies aimed at developing better understanding of issues associated with good academic performance in South African HDATSS. The identified gaps then helped in the formulation of the problem to be studied and in the selection of appropriate methodology for conducting the study. The review also helped bring about a conceptual clarification that enabled a coherent conceptual operationalisation throughout this study. Also comprising part of the review were theories related to issues of central focus in this study. However, the grounded theoretical nature of this study meant that the theoretical review was not, as is generally the case with most research, aimed at formulating a theoretical framework. What this means is that the aim was not to prove or disprove predetermined hypotheses. The purpose of the theoretical review was, instead, aimed at gaining a familiarisation that would help determine similarities and/or differences between the theory emerging from data collected in this study and existing theories on related issues. Furthermore, the theories alerted me to possible explanations in relation to data to be gathered.

The location of the reviewed literature is not only in the area of academic performance but also in the wider areas of school effectiveness and improvement. This is even though of main concern was academic performance. The extension was influenced by consistent findings by international research that good academic performance characterises all effective schools, irrespective of criteria framing school effectiveness conceptualisation, (see, for example, Mortimore, et al., 1992 and Rutter, et al., 1979). As a result, the literature tends to focus on whole school effectiveness rather than merely on academic performance as seems to be the case with local studies (see, for example Malcolm, 1999 and Christie, 2001). A possible explanation for this confinement is the country's legacy that had the schools' academic performance critically disadvantaged and, as a result, in dire need of strategies to help reverse the situation. Furthermore, the fragmented nature of the legacy makes the task of

determining school effectiveness for the whole country a much more complex task than it is for northern and western countries. As a result of the international trend, discussion will use 'school effectiveness' and 'academic performance' terminologies interchangeably, depending on the literature informing a particular discussion.

The reviewed literature is discussed in two main sections entitled 'the relationship between academic performance and school culture' and 'the relationship between school culture and school leadership'. Each of the sections engages with both conceptualisations and theories related to the relationships. The decision to incorporate both into each of the sections and not treat them as separate entities was influenced by a view that both are integral to our understanding of the relationships. Literature reviewed in relation to the methodology utilised for the exploration of the relationships forms part of the next chapter.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL CULTURE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

As already indicated, the task of developing better understanding of academic performance in HDATSS began with a review of school effectiveness and improvement literature in general. The purpose was to identify issues that have been found to be associated with academic performance irrespective of school context. One issue identified as of foundational association with academic performance, and therefore of central focus in this study, was school culture. This concept has been found to be crucial not only for academic performance but also for school effectiveness, school improvement and the management of educational change in general (see, for example, Schein, 1985; Burns, 1992; Stolp, 1994; Christie, 2001; Malcolm, et al, 1999; Prosser, 1999; Lumby, 2003 and Russell, 2003). These findings have resulted in increased conviction among authors such as Bush (1994) that school effectiveness is influenced much more by networks of informal relationships and unofficial norms than it is by formal structures. Also illustrating this conviction is Deal & Kennedy's (1983 in Stoll & Fink, 1999: 80) claim that if school 'culture works against you, it's nearly impossible to get anything done'. Illustrating this trend not only for school effectiveness and improvement but also for organizational change

is Farmer's (in Keup, et al., 2001: 1) claim that 'failure to understand the way in which an organization's culture will interact with various contemplated change strategies ... may mean the failure of strategies themselves'.

Academic performance

Even though of main concern in this study was the improvement of academic performance in HDATSS, the literature review did not delve much into the subject of academic performance. This was because of a conviction that a deep understanding of academic performance was not of central concern in this study. Further detracting from an intense literature review on this concept was a view that the concept is extensively contested and that engagement in this contest would be of no added value. Furthering the contest in the South African context was the introduction of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) school curriculum in 1998. 'Critical outcomes' listed in the curriculum, for example, have dissenters viewing the curriculum as implying that academic performance is of little importance in determining 'good' education.

In view of this lack of consensus, I decided to base the conceptualision of academic performance on the degree to which the performance helped achieve the government's desire that education serves as a foundation for national reconstruction. What this meant was that academic performance in this study needed to be informed by an aspect of 'academic performance' viewed as laying a foundation for such national reconstruction, particularly in relation to economic well-being. This stance led to the identification of performance at matriculation level as representing such a promise. This is not only because examination at this level is standardized but also because performance at the matriculation level promises a gateway to further education and/or escape from menial labour and dire poverty.

School culture

The literature review on school culture was aimed at acquiring better understanding of the concept's relationship with academic performance. The focus was on the following issues:

- what the school culture concept means and entails;
- theoretical approaches framing school and/or organisational culture studies; and
- school and/or organisational models that have so far been generated as explanations to issues relating to organisational/school effectiveness in general and academic performance in particular.

The meaning of school culture

Despite increasing awareness among educationists on the importance of school culture for academic performance, education researchers are yet to translate the awareness into increased research activity on the subject. The reviewed literature suggested that at the root of this reluctance is the complexity of the concept of school culture . This is because the concept means different things to different researchers. What brings about this multiplicity of meanings is that the concept is derived from organizational culture which itself derives its meanings from sociological and anthropological conceptualisations and which themselves assign multiple meanings to the concept. Also contributing to the multiplicity is that culture is socially constructed and therefore has its meaning largely dependent on people's perceptions. Further contributing to the complexity is that even though culture is always present, it does not readily define itself. Great patience is therefore required if the concept is to be fully understood and articulated. This makes the concept's study a rather intricate, nebulous and elusive undertaking (Schein, 1985).

Traditionally, culture conceptualisation confined itself to behavioural aspects and, as a result, was mostly depicted merely as 'the way we do things around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1992 in Lumby, 2003: 160). Examples of such depictions include:

- *Observed behavioural regularities* such as language and rituals used around deference and demeanor (Goffman, 1959, 1967; Van Maanen, 1979b);
- The *rules* of the game for getting along in the organization, 'the ropes' that a new comer must learn in order to become an accepted member (Schein, 1968, 1978; Van Maanen, 1976, 1979b; Ritti and Funkhouser, 1982)

(Schein, 1985: 6)

An examination of this level of conceptualisation reveals a trend that perceived cultural members as passive entities whose participation in a culture is primarily determined by a conditioning driven by a desire to be accepted into a particular group. This trend translated into a view of organizational culture as comprising of *norms* that evolve in working groups as determinants of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'. For schools this translated to '...proper behaviour for teachers in schools or colleges towards their students, towards parents, towards students' sponsors, and towards each other' (Bennett, et al, 1993:3). Such conceptualisation results, for example, in perceptions of 'whether it is deemed acceptable behaviour for a teacher to enter another teacher's classroom, or whether a teacher can acknowledge failure or difficulty' (op cit). A shortcoming of these conceptualisations is that they ignore explicit and consensual underpinnings to culture formations, particularly in organisations such as schools.

The 1980s witnessed a departure that challenged the behavioural confinement of culture conceptualisation and helped deepen understanding of the school culture concept. Perceived as particularly unsatisfactory about the confinement was the view of culture participants as passive entities rather than active participants in the formation of cultures. Indicative of the shift were terms that depicted culture as 'shared learning', 'psychological functioning', 'meaning systems', 'beliefs', and 'values', as is the case in the following conceptualisations of organisational/school culture as:

- is dynamic and develops over time as a product of a group's history; demography, economic development, ecological environment and geography; and
- has different layers that are composed of:
  - symbols which for schools may include emblems and heroes serving as role models because they embody characteristics that are highly prized by the group;
  - rituals and rules followed in a given environment; and
  - values which form the core of all cultures and represent collective beliefs about what is good or bad, normal, rational and valuable for any given group.

Sealing the conceptualisation of school culture for the purposes of this study was Schein's (1985) view that any organizational conceptualisation that ignores member assumptions regarding the other culture constituents overlooks the essence of organizational culture and is therefore incomplete. Schein's argument is that behavioural patterns are no more than mere artifacts of culture and therefore cannot define the cultural concept. His view is that it is only after deeper layers of culture, made up of assumptions, have been discovered, can it be determined whether the patterns represent culture or not. For the author, (school/organisational) culture therefore is about:

> A pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.
> (Schein, 1985: 9)

The above developments led to the conceptualisation of school culture in this study that reflected a combination of the shifts. Consequently, what was explored in the sample schools comprised not only behavioural patterns but also the beliefs, values and assumptions that underpinned the norms. It was hoped that such a combination would help develop understanding that would better inform practice aimed at the

formation of school cultures associated with good academic performance in HDATSS than had been the case with studies that had their conceptualisation confined to the superficial normative aspect. The view was that while findings providing behavioural 'snapshots' provide good understanding of school cultures associated with good academic performance at the schools, the pictures do not provide information on what underpins such school cultures. What this means is that the 'snapshots' do not provide information on why such cultures are desirable for these particular schools and therefore potentially enabling for them.

The importance of school culture for academic performance

In addition to the role of a school culture conceptualisation that integrates all cultural levels for developing the desired understanding, what also played an important role in this development was exposure to literature on the role of organisational/school cultures for organizational and/or school effectiveness. The claims are that the importance of organisational/school cultures for organizational/school effectiveness lies in the powerful and pervasive influence of cultures on people's perceptions and activities (Hoy and Miskel, 1978). An explanation for such influence is that cultures are highly 'visible' and 'feelable' and therefore impact readily on people's feelings and that this, in turn, determines individuals' performance. This makes cultures of critical importance for performance in educational institutions, considering the institutions' 'people-centredness' and 'high dependence on the nature and effectiveness of interpersonal relationships' (Law and Glover (2000: 116).

Examples of organisational/school cultural aspects that impact on people's feelings and related performance include:

- work methods and roles
- dress codes
- rules and regulations
- interpersonal relationships
- productivity and quality.

(Williams et al, 1989: 28)

School culture paradigms

Another aspect that helped broaden the development of better understanding of the relationship between school culture and academic performance were sets of theories that frame studies on organizational and/or school cultures. As already stated, exposure to the theories was not aimed at developing a theoretical framework for activities in this study but to help determine similarities and/or differences between existing theories and the theory emerging from findings in this study.

Theories of integration, differentiation and fragmentation

This set of theories has researchers viewing organizational/school cultures as integrated; differentiated; or fragmented/ambiguous. Of particular interest about the set is that while organizational culture researchers utilise the theories to frame their studies, school culture researchers tend to utilise the 'theories' for describing school cultures associated with different levels of school effectiveness. The exposure alerted me to the possibility that one, or a combination, of the theories could be descriptive of school cultures emerging from this study as being potentially enabling for academic performance in HDATSS.

The integrationist paradigm

Researchers subscribing to this paradigm are of the view that organizational culture is 'key to managerial control, worker commitment, and organizational effectiveness (e.g. Ouchi, 1981; Pascal and Athos, 1981; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Peters and Waterman, 1982 in Meyerson and Martin, 1997: 33). Further underpinning this trend is a view that organizational/school culture is basically about shared and/or unique givens of an organization or a group (Clark, 1970; Smircich, 1983b; Schein, 1985 in Meyerson and Martin, 1997: 32) or about 'normative glue that holds together a potentially diverse group of organizational members' (Geertz, 1973; Schein, 1993, in Meyerson & Martin, 1997: 32). The claim is that comprising the 'glue' is 'consistency across cultural manifestations; consensus among cultural members; and – usually – a focus on leaders as culture creators' (Meyerson & Martin, 1997: 32).

Research underpinned by this paradigm focuses on identifying relevant manifestations of culture in terms of 'a common language, shared values, or an agreed-upon set of

appropriate behaviours' (Meyerson and Martin, 1997: 32). In so doing, the studies focus on one or a combination of the following:

- the espoused values of top management, particularly the 'top leader', portraying him/her as the primary source of cultural content and 'offering the possibility that the charisma of a particularly effective leader might be institutionalized, giving the leader a form of immortality';
- formal or informal practices such as decision making and communication norms or 'the more obviously symbolic aspects of such as rituals and stories; and
- deeper products of culture such as basic assumptions, codes of meaning or shared understandings

(Meyerson and Martin, 1997: 32)

Studies on school cultures have mostly been finding this theory to be characteristic of school cultures of effective schools. The findings are that issues that are potentially enabling for school effectiveness about this form of culture are consensus, group consciousness, sense of membership, interdependence, cohesion, collaboration, trust, a sense of wholeness, unitary action staff commitment cohesion (Torrington and Weightman, 1993; Christie, 1997; Malcolm, et al, 1999; Day, et al, 2000; Fugelstad & Lillejord, 2002; Bennett, 1992; Torrington and Weightman, 1993; West-Burnham, 1995; and Law and Glover, 2000). What is thought to be enabling about these features is that they allow school members to function comfortably with one other, making it possible for them to concentrate on primary tasks. Viewed as enabling about this is that:

> ... if internal issues are not settled, if people are preoccupied with their positions and identity, if they are insecure, if they do not know the rules of the game and therefore cannot predict or understand what is going on, they cannot concentrate on the important survival issues that they face in the organization
> (Meyerson and Martin, 1997: 32).

Differentiation paradigm

Contrary to the integrationists' emphasis on homogeneity, underpinning theories of differentiation are views that organisations are basically as complex as are broader societal groupings. The view is that comprising all organizational cultures therefore are 'various sub-units, including groups and individuals who represent constituencies based within and outside the organization' (Louis, 1983; Nord, 1985 in Meyerson & Martin, 1997: 34). As a result, this trend views all organisations as having cultures that 'contain elements of occupational, hierarchical, class, racial, ethnic, and gender-based identifications' (Beyer, 1981; Trice and Beyer, 1984, Van Maanen and Barley, 1984 in Meyerson and Martin, 1997: 32. Comprising this line of thought therefore are views that organisations are in reality 'composed of a collection of values and manifestations, some of which may be contradictory' (Meyerson and Martin, op cit). Such manifestations in schools include teacher sub-cultures such as:

- *Individualism* descriptive of teacher autonomy, isolation or insulation
- *Collaboration* wherein teachers spontaneously and voluntarily choose to work together independently of external control
- *Contrived collegiality* where administrators impose collaborative working relationships by fixing times, agendas and places for 'collaboration'
- *Balkanization* which refers to forms of collaboration where teachers are neither isolated nor work as a whole school but form smaller groups within official sub-groups. Characterising such differentiation is 'insulation of subgroups from each other, little movement between them; ... and ... concern with micro political issues of status, promotion and power dynamics'.

(Hargreaves 1994a in Stoll and Fink, 1999: 180-1)

While the majority of studies on school cultures of effective schools have found 'effective' schools to be predominantly characterized by integrationist cultures, some studies have also found cultures of differentiation as charactering effective schools. This has been found to be the case in instances where sub-cultures remain aligned to core values underpinning the general aims and actions promoted by the school's umbrella convictions and, as a result, are of no threat to internal coherence. Such findings are particularly characteristic of cases where differentiation forms a basis for

staff motivation, for example, where different sub-cultural units achieve excellence by competing against one another (Bennett, 1993).

Ambiguity paradigms

The group of researchers that subscribes to this paradigm is of the view that organisations are in reality characterised by a lack of clarity in terms of organisational goals and/or values. The group's conviction is that integrationist paradigms are an over-simplification of reality. As a result, research framed by ambiguity paradigms focuses on searching for inconsistencies, confusion, paradox and hypocrisy. These paradigms are, as a result, of prime choice for research on new or extremely innovative organisations (Meyerson and Martin, 1997).

Studies have been finding school cultures of ineffective schools to be mostly characterised by ambiguity. Staff and students in such schools are often found to display ambiguity regarding the schools' nature of work, the role of the organization, or the nature of 'relationships expected to exist between groups within the organisation' (Bennett, 1993: 31).

Theories of wider; generic; unique; and perceived school cultures

Another set of school culture theories that helped provide alternatives through which better understanding of the topic of this study could be developed is one based on a view that organizational/school cultures are primarily shaped by a particular context or a combination of contexts which are either:

- wider;
- generic;
- unique;
- or perceived.

(Prosser, 2003: 7-9).

The *wider school culture* approach is based on a belief that schools do not exist in a vacuum. The view is that all school cultures are therefore impregnated either by national and/or local cultures. As a result, researchers subscribing to this theory search

for links between school cultures and the wider national or local culture. Wider contexts perceived as having influence on school cultures include nationality, race; social class; gender; and/or rural/urban location.

The thinking behind *generic school culture* paradigm is that organisations of similar concerns, for example schools, share unspoken cultural similarities in terms of common values and actions, norms, structures, traditions and rituals (Prosser, 2003).

The *unique culture* paradigm is based on the assumption that even though there may be similarities among the cultures of organisations of a similar nature, participants within such organisations utilize their degree of freedom of choice to uniquely interpret the similarities. This allows the individuals in schools to create their own unique school cultures based on predominant insider values leading to in-house rules for 'getting on and getting by'.

The last of the theories in this set of approaches, the *perceived culture* paradigm, alerted me to the possibility that what was being revealed through observations and interviews about the sample schools' cultures could possibly be manifestations of perceptions not necessarily commensurate with the schools' actual cultures. To avoid such a pitfall it was decided to triangulate data collection, as described in more detail in the next chapter.

Similar to the set of theories discussed prior to this one this one, this set helped provide extended awareness of alternatives through which the relationship between school cultures and academic performance could be understood. The review therefore was not aimed at generating a theoretical framework. The set alerted me to the possibility that school culture deviations or conformity to particular contexts could offer explanations on why particular school cultures worked or did not work for particular schools' academic performance.

School culture models

The development of better understanding on school culture was further assisted by exposure to debates on organisational/school culture models aimed at explaining the

relationship between organisational/school cultures and organisational/school effectiveness.

Club, role, task and person school culture models

One of these debates centre on a model developed by Handy on the assumption that organizational cultures are a reflection of power structured around either one of the following: the club, roles, tasks, or persons (Bennett, 1992; Bush, 1995; and Law and Glover 2000).

Club culture models label organisational/school cultures with centralised power and control 'often via a single leader supported by a powerful inner group' of individuals (Law and Glover, 2000: 116).

Role cultures models, on the other hand, are characterised by formal demarcations of roles/responsibilities. Control and influence in such cultures flows from senior management and is regulated by clearly defined policies and procedures.

Contrary to centralized power of club and role cultures, of importance to schools characterised by *task culture models* are project teams based on expertise rather than formal positions. The teams get to be formed and reformed depending on the nature of tasks. As a result, power and influence in this type of organisation is diffused throughout the organisation.

Person cultures are the least common of the models. Their main preoccupation is on facilitating the work of particular individuals within organisations.

The Basic School Culture Model

Unlike the previous set of models whose origin is located in organisational cultures in general, the Basic School Culture Model was generated by Hargreaves (1995) with specific reference to school cultures. The model was informed by Bale's (1952, 1953 in Hargreaves, 1995: 25) findings on group dynamics. The findings were that groups achieve their goals either by exerting pressure (instrumental or task achievement function) on members to stick to task and/ or by devising social controls that help maintain social harmony (expressive or social relations function). School cultures are

in this model classified as formal, welfarist, hothouse, or survivalist, depending on the degree to which they are instrumental or expressive.

Formal school cultures label cultures high on the instrumental domain and, as a result, are orderly and strong on discipline. Such school cultures put exceptional pressures on student achievement but display weak social cohesion between and among staff and students.

Welfarist school cultures refer to child-centered cultures low on the instrumental domain but high on the expressive. These cultures are characterized by a relaxed, carefree and cosy atmosphere, informal and friendly interaction, and democratic and nurturing teacher-student relations.

Hothouse school cultures is a label given to school cultures that are high on both instrumental and expressive control, both of which are brought about by constant surveillance, covert coercion and blackmail. The combination creates a frenetic, and sometimes stressful, ethos characterized by teacher enthusiasm, innovativeness, commitment, and pedagogical experimenting.

Both control and social cohesion are exceptionally low in schools displaying *survivalist school cultures*. These cultures are said to occur as a result of compensatory efforts in schools perceived as being close to break down.

The Second Typology of the 'Basic Model'

Hargreaves (1995) later extended his Basic Model to what he termed 'The Second Typology of the Basic Model'. While the first typology was conceptualised along a continuum of instrumental control on one end and social cohesion on the other, the second typology conceptualised school cultures as resulting mainly from social structures which may either be political, micro-political, maintenance, developmental or service.

The *political structure* refers to school cultures with formal and hierarchical distribution of power, authority and status.

The *micro political* is a label Hargreaves gave to school cultures characterized by 'an informal network of individuals and groups who plot, plan and act together to advance their interests' at the expense of those of the whole school (Hargreaves, ibid: 31).

Collegial committees characterize both the *maintenance* and *development* structures. The difference between the two is that while the former arises from a school's need for stability, the latter arises out of a need for change.

The last of the structures, *service*, refers to school cultures that focus on social relations and distribution of rights and duties between schools and clients, for example, parents and students.

The above school culture models served the same purpose in this study as did the exposure to approaches that generally frame the study of organisational/school cultures. While not serving as frameworks, the models helped sharpen understanding of school cultures in relation to academic performance.

The literature review on school cultures demonstrated the complexity surrounding the development of better understanding of the relationship between school culture and academic performance. The complexity results from numerous meanings given to both academic performance and school culture. Academic performance conceptualisation was not delved into in depth because it was not of major concern, except in so far as it provided a benchmark against which national reconstruction is measured in terms, for example, of economic well-being. Of more concern was school culture conceptualisation. While some scholars view school culture only in terms of normative behaviour, others incorporate underpinnings such as values, beliefs and/or assumptions into their conceptualisation. All of the 'levels' were incorporated into the school culture conceptual framework in this study in the belief that this would contribute to better understanding of the sample schools' cultures than would be the case if only the normative level comprised the framework. Also contributing to the complexity of studying school cultures is the multiplicity of approaches underpinning the studies and the multiplicity of existing models descriptive of school cultures. This complexity led to a decision that data analysis would be grounded in gathered data rather than in a predetermined theoretical framework.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL CULTURE AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The incorporation of the relationship between school culture and school leadership in this study was prompted by a conviction that the understanding of school cultures associated with good academic performance in HDATSS does not, on its own, sufficiently inform practice aimed at the formation of the desired school cultures. This made it important to also examine school leadership considering its widely accepted association with the formation of school cultures. This acceptance is informed by widespread findings that power is deeply implicated in the development and maintenance of organisational/school cultures (see, for example, Torrington & Weightman, 1993; Beare, 1989; Bennett, 1993; Dalin, 1993 and Leithwood, et al., 1999). The findings are so widespread that they have brought about a deep conviction among authors such as Schein (1985: xi) that 'much of what is mysterious about leadership becomes clearer if we separate leadership from management and link leadership specifically to creating and changing culture'. As a result, Schein (1985: 2) is of the opinion that 'unless we learn to analyse ... culture accurately, we cannot really understand why organisations do some of the things they do and why leaders have some of the difficulties that they have'. For the author this is because:

> Organizational cultures are created by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership may well be the creation, the management, and – if and when they may become necessary – the destruction of culture. Culture and leadership, when one examines them closely, are two sides of the same coin, and neither can really be understood by itself. In fact there is a possibility – underemphasized in leadership research – that the only thing of importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture. If the concept of leadership, as distinguished from management, is to have any value we must recognize the centrality of this culture management function in the leadership concept.
> (Schein, 1985: 2)

The task of developing better understanding of the relationship between school leadership and school culture involved reviewing the following leadership aspects:

- the meaning of what leadership means and entails;
- types of leadership;
- traditional approaches to leadership studies; and
- emergent approaches to leadership studies.

What leadership means and entails

The issue of developing the required understanding in this study was further complicated by the realisation that determining what leadership means and entails is not a straightforward task. This is because of a profusion of meanings given to the concept by its numerous scholars. While some of the scholars confine their conceptualisation to positions of formal authority, others locate theirs in personality traits and/or behaviours and/or organisational conditions such as membership maturity/immaturity. The following offer an illustration of both the conceptual profusion and associated 'dissent':

- leadership is power based predominantly on personal characteristics, usually normative in nature – Etzioni
- to lead is to engage in an act that initiates a structure in action as part of the process of solving a mutual problem – Hemphill
- the leader is an individual in a group given the task of directing and coordinating task relevant group activities – Fiedler
- leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal setting and goal achievement - Stogdill
- leadership is the initiation of a new structure or procedure for accomplishing an organisation's goals and objectives – Lipham
- leadership is a particular style of power relationship characterized by a group's member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behaviour patterns for the former regarding his activity as a group member – Janda

- the essence of organizational leadership is the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization – Katz and Kahn
- leadership takes place in groups of two or more people and most frequently involves influencing group member behaviour as it relates to the pursuit of group goals – House and Baetz

(Hoy and Miskel, 1978: 270-1)

A conclusion drawn from the profusion and 'dissent' was that it was necessary to search for some commonality among the conceptualizations if the desired understanding was to be achieved. The search led to Owens' (1998: 200) claim that, despite the profusion and apparent 'dissent', for most leadership scholars the leadership concept refers basically to:

- a group function that occurs only in the process of two or more people interacting, and
- is about intentionally seeking to influence the behaviour of other people.

Conceptualisations echoing Owens' claim on the essence of leadership include one by Katz and Kahn (1978, in Schmuck, 1986: 18) that the concept refers to:

> ... *influential* (italics mine) increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization. Thus, in schools, the principal's leadership might result in teachers spending extra time with students or in preparing for class, in teachers attending more in-service events than expected by the contract, or in teachers offering their colleagues materials from their own curriculum file.

As a result of insights such as these provided by Owens and Katz & Kahn, *explorations in this study were framed by a view of leadership as basically being about intentional influence over organisational/school members' attitudes and actions.* What this meant was that leadership in this study was not going to necessarily be viewed as a preserve of individuals occupying positions of official authority. This led to a decision to identify leaders at the sample schools by administering a questionnaire requiring respondents to list individuals they viewed as having

influence over others' attitudes and actions at the schools before examining that which brought about this capacity and/or perception. It was hoped that this strategy would help focus attention to individuals that actually provided leadership at the schools rather than on people presumed to be doing so.

Power and leadership

One other aspect which helped develop better understanding of the relationship between school leadership and school culture in HDATSS related to claims that the capacity to influence others' attitudes and actions entails one sort of 'power' or another over others. Sources of such power are said to reside in some of the following sources:

- *Reward power* residing in individuals who have control over rewards desired by others.
- *Coercive power* used by 'leaders' who are in control of resources that can be utilised to punish non-compliant individuals or to induce compliance from those who wish to avoid punishment.
- *Expert power* residing in individuals possessing knowledge that others want for themselves so much that they are induced to comply with the knowledge power wielder in order to either gain the knowledge for themselves or benefit from it.
- *Legitimate power* of individuals having authority conferred on them by official positions recognized by others as having a legitimate right to obedience.
- *Referent power* located in personal charisma, ideas or beliefs so admired by others that they comply with the power wielder in order to be associated with her/him and, in so doing, become more like the power wielder

(Owens, 1998: 202).

Of interest about the 'power' claims was exposure to the possibility that influence on schools' cultures could reside in issues other than the taken for granted official positions. Also, of interest with respect to the power debate was that even though literature has for some time been offering the above as probable sources of 'leadership

power', none of the reviewed literature offered information on sources of power associated with the formation of school cultures in general, let alone in HDATSS in particular.

Leadership imperatives

Literature that also helped provide foundation for the development of better understanding of what leadership means and entails, particularly in educational contexts, related to views that leadership is comprised of distinct, even if sometimes interrelated, roles or imperatives. For educational leadership such imperatives are claimed to include instructional; moral; political; managerial; and/or cultural roles.

The *instructional* imperative rests on the assumption that of critical importance for 'school leaders should be the behaviour of staff as they engage in activities directly affecting the quality of teaching and learning in the pursuit of enhanced pupil outcomes' (Gold, et al, 2003: 129). Such activities include controlling constraints on the amount of time students spend on particular tasks; improving teacher working patterns by rearranging space and time to promote new norms of collegiality and experimentation; using discretionary resources to encourage and enhance innovative instructional activity; 'fostering agreement on appropriate teacher-expectation needed to encourage higher levels of student motivation; facilitating debates on what counts as a 'good lesson'; forms of feedback received by students; and focus on what constitutes acceptable performance for the school' (op cit).

Moral leadership, on the other hand, is based on the assumption 'that the critical focus of leadership ought to be on *the values and ethics of leaders* themselves' (Leithwood, et al, 1999; 10). Thus, this imperative is informed by 'a defensible conception of what is right and good' in education (op cit) as determined by issues such as 'democracy, empowerment, and social justice' (Reitzug, 1994 in Leithwood, et al, 1999: 10).

The *managerial* imperative departs from the social and moral concerns of the above two imperatives to focus primarily on technical issues. What is of concern for this imperative is the balancing of managerial activities necessary to achieve efficiency on

one hand, and the leadership visionary and judgment necessary to achieve effectiveness on the other (http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/comass/9708/page03.htlm).

For Clark (1997, in http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadcon.html), the *political* imperative refers to a leader that is 'an advocate – focused on coalition and building - and a hustler - focused on manipulation'. At the centre of this imperative are personal and/or interest group, rather than organisational, agendas achieved mainly by 'manipulating the power system' for own benefit (Law and Glover, 2000: 31).

The last of the imperatives, the *cultural,* refers to 'defining, strengthening, and articulating, through words and actions, cultural values of a particular organization' (Fugelstad & Lillejord, 2002: 10). While in reality the imperatives are not experienced or exercised distinctly, their awareness helped highlight the *cultural imperative as most likely to be at the centre of developing better understanding of the relationship between school leadership and school cultures*. This view was influenced by a view that the imperative speaks to attitudes and actions of organisational members much more directly than is the case with the other imperatives.

Types of leaderships

Further providing a foundation for better understanding of the relationship between school leadership and school cultures was a long standing 'classification' of leadership into types such as the charismatic; organizational; intellectual; or informal leaders (Ferrinho, 1980).

The *charismatic* type labels leadership 'capable of expressing the aims of the group and its solidarity in a dramatic and emotive way' (Ferrinho, 1980: 71). However, although astute at expressing problems, this type of leadership is not astute at developing solutions to the problems even though good at identifying and soliciting this strength from suitable candidates. It is only after the solutions have been developed that the charismatic leader re-exerts his/her great influence to ensure effective adoption of the solutions. In short, the strength of this type of leadership lies in its capacity for promoting group cohesiveness by evoking emotional involvement;

interpreting and defining situations in a dramatic way; providing a 'rational' interpretation for group members of what is wrong, what should be done, how it should be done, and with what purpose; canalizing member energies towards goals to be achieved; and stimulating member creativity and productivity (Ferrinho, 1980).

The strength of the *organisational* type of leadership lies in its performance of formal administration and technological tasks. Also of value about this type are problem analysis; solution designing; and integration of activities. These strengths derive from a 'know-how' that emphasises *task* performance and technological efficiency, thereby minimizing 'thinking' and 'discussion'.

Ferrinho describes the *intellectual* leadership as the cornerstone of organisations because:

> ... not only do intellectual leaders introduce historical perspective, interpreting the less immediate goals, but they also view relationships between the different aspects of a problem with less distortion. The cooperation of these leaders in plan design and evaluation is (therefore) very useful ...
> (1982: 72)

Informal leadership, on the other hand, derives its influential capacity from its sensitivity to problems experienced by members in an organisation. This is because

> Informal leaders feel, think, and act like everybody else, yet at the same time they have the capacity to express people's judgements and expectations in a way that the community accepts as being the legitimate common expression of the souls and minds of residents. Because of informal leaders' closeness to the people, they are the most able to work with the community at grassroots level.
> Ferrinho, 1982: 72)

A question that arose in relation to the above leadership types was which, if any, are associated with school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS.

Approaches to the study of leadership

Further complicating the development of a better understanding of the relationship between school leadership and school cultures is the multiplicity of approaches framing the study of leadership. The approaches have undergone multiple shifts from the pioneering views of leadership as an inborn quality through to more recent views of the concept as a transformational (Burns (1978), moral (Owens, 2000) and value-laden (Day, 2000) activity that can be shaped by context, personal behaviour and convictions (Russell, 2003).

Traditional approaches

The traditional approaches to the study of leadership fall into four main categories: the trait theories; the behavioural theories; the situational and contingency theories; and the transformational and transactional theories.

Trait theories

Pioneering, and dominating, approaches to the study of leadership and debates on leadership effectiveness up till the 1950s was the trait approach or the so called *'great man theory of leadership'*. Claims by disciples of this approach were that the capacity to influence others lies in certain physical and/or personality characteristics (Hoy and Miskel, 1978). This view was fuelled by studies which found that individuals with leadership effectiveness display characteristics that fall into particular categories. One such study was by Stogdill (1981) whose findings were that leaders display:

- Capacities such as intelligence, alertness, verbal facility, originality, and judgment.
- Achievement in areas such as scholarship, knowledge and athletics.
- Responsibility conveyed through features such as dependability, initiative, persistence, aggressiveness, self-confidence and desire to excel.
- Participation activities of sociability, cooperation, adaptability and humor.
- Status in areas such as socio-economic positions and popularity.

(Hoy and Miskell, 1978; 272).

Although overtaken by other approaches in the 1960s and 70s, this approach continues to underpin some leadership studies. One such study was conducted by Gardener (Doyle, 2001) as recently as the late 1980s. Findings in that study were that leaders possess a number of similar attributes, irrespective of location in place and time, such as physical vitality and stamina; intelligence and action-oriented judgement; eagerness to accept responsibility; task competence; understanding of followers and their needs; skill in dealing with people; need for achievement; capacity to motivate people; courage and resolution; trustworthiness; decisiveness; self-confidence; assertiveness; and adaptability/flexiveness (Doyle, M.E., et al, 2001).

This approach lost favour when subsequent studies failed to consistently produce the same mix for all situations. Further contributing to the theory's downfall were challenges by feminists on the basis that features claimed to be characteristic of leadership effectiveness were descriptive of masculine behaviour and therefore excluded females from leadership (Rosener, 1990 and Coleman, 2003). Further fuelling the criticisms were findings by female researchers that contradicted masculine attributes identified by preceding studies. An example of such study was one conducted by Rosener whose conclusion was that 'the command-and-control leadership style associated with men is not the only way to succeed' (Rosener, 1990: 119).

Behavioural theories

Claims by successive behavioural theorists were that leadership effectiveness owes its success to particular behaviours rather than particular personal traits. The conviction was that individuals seeking leadership effectiveness need to adopt influential dimensions of behaviour. Examples of such dimensions include the:

- initiating structure (task-orientation) or the concern/consideration for people structure (relationship-orientation); and
- directive or the participative.

Dimensions of task-orientation or relationship-orientation

The task-oriented leadership dimension emphasises production and/or task completion by focusing on the structuring of work so that it facilitates 'productivity'. Such structuring involves, among other things, the delineation of work group relationships; specification of tasks to be performed; establishment of patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure; designation of responsibilities; information provisioning; issuing of rules; and issuing of rewards for compliance or punishments for disobedience (Owens, 1998: 205).

Relationship-oriented leadership, on the other hand, focuses on building and maintaining 'favourable' relations between leaders and the led and among colleagues. These are established though the development of friendships, mutual trust, respect and warmth between the 'leader' and 'followers' and among 'followers'. To achieve this dimension leaders engage in behaviours such as soliciting advice, opinions and information from followers on decisions to be made or sharing of decision making with followers (Owens, 1998).

Dimensions of directing or participation

The difference between the directive and the participative dimensions is that the former is 'characterized by leaders taking decisions for others – and expecting followers or subordinates to follow instructions while the latter focuses on sharing decision-making with others (Wright 1996: 36-7, cited by Doyle and Smith, 2001: 5).

Other clusters comprising behavioural approaches to leadership studies and debates on leadership effectiveness include managerial vs. visionary leadership (Lesourd, et al, 1992); autocratic vs. democratic vs. laissez faire leadership (Johnston, 1986; Hoy and Brown, 1988; Cheng, 1991; Uwazurike, 1991; Fenech, 1994); male vs. female (Rosener, 1991, Coleman, 1994); and manipulative vs. facilitative leadership (Dunlap and Goldman 1991). A full discussion of each of the clusters was deemed not to be particularly necessary for the purposes of this study. The approach was however helpful in bringing about awareness that one of the aspects that might be pertinent to the relationship between school culture and school leadership related to behavioural leadership dimensions.

In common with preceding approaches, the behavioural theories have received their fair share of criticism. The criticisms are based on views that leaders have never been found to lean consistently on one side of the dimensions but that the general tendency is for leaders to favour either of the dimensions under different circumstances (Owens, 1998).

Situation and contingency theories

This set of theories departed from the practice of searching for leadership effectiveness from personality traits and/or behaviours to focus on organizational situations or links between the situations and leader behaviour. Subscribers to the situation *theories* were of the view that leadership success is determined mostly by the nature of organisations. Situations viewed as being determinant of the success included structural properties such as size, hierarchical structure and formalization; organizational climate; role characteristics in terms of, for example, position power, type and difficulty of task, and procedural rules; and subordinate characteristics in areas such as knowledge, experience, tolerance for ambiguity, responsibility, and power (Hoy and Miskel, 1978: 273).

In common with preceding approaches, situation approaches failed to provide comprehensive answers to the question of leadership effectiveness. Not all organisations portraying 'appropriate' situations as spelt out by the situation theories brought about the hoped for leadership effectiveness (Hoy and Miskel, 1978). Despite this 'failure', the approach continues to inform leadership studies. For example, framing this study to some extent were findings that fundamental to good academic performance is an enabling environment which, in this case, refers to enabling school culture. However, unlike the situation theories in their purest form, the study was not based on an assumption that specific cultural features would contribute to leadership effectiveness, or *vice versa,* for all contexts. What this meant was that explorations in this study were framed more by contingence theories described below than they were by situation theories.

Shifts to *contingency theories*, also referred to by some as 'situational' theories, were prompted by a realisation that 'there is no one package for ... leadership: no one model to be learned and applied, regardless of culture and context' (Riley 2000: 47

citing Riley, 1998). The view was that 'there are wide variations in the contexts for leadership and that, to be effective, these contexts require different leadership responses' (Leithwood, 1999). What these theorists viewed as being critical for leadership effectiveness therefore was '*how leaders respond to unique organizational circumstances or problems they face* as a consequence, for example, of the nature and preferences of co-workers, conditions of work and tasks to be undertaken' (Leithwood, 1999: 15). In short, this departure viewed leadership effectiveness as, in essence, being determined by a fit between 'leadership' behaviour on one hand, and the situation on the other (Fiedler, 1984 & Leithwood, et. al., 1999).

Persuading the tentative lean towards the contingency approach in this study were widespread research findings pointing to the approach's strength in providing better understanding between school culture and school leadership. Examples of such studies were those conducted by Torrington and Weightman (1993) in the United Kingdom. Findings in these studies were, for example, that while staff cohesion in one of the sample schools was associated with the involvement of senior management team in all school activities, the opposite was the case in another sample school. Staff cohesion at the latter school was, instead, found to be associated with distance kept by the principal and senior staff from junior staff. A possible explanation for the differences was that the reason participation had succeeded in the former school was probably because its entire staff, including the management team, was young. On the other hand, the reason the latter had been 'appropriate' for the latter school was probably because the school was not only a private Christian (Catholic) organization but also because staff at the school was more mature in terms of age and experience.

Transformational and transactional theories

Seminal insights by Burns (1978) in the late 1970s departed from the formalistic two dimensional explanations of preceding leadership theories to offer an alternative explanation on leadership effectiveness that was to frame a large number of leadership scholarship henceforth. The departure was prompted by a conviction that up-to-then 'leadership' had relied on transactional relationships and that these did not result in 'true' leadership effectiveness in the sense that their effects were superficial and, as a result, short-lived. For Burns (op cit), ineffective about transactional relationships was not only their failure to bring about long-lasting influence when leader promises are

not kept, but also the fact that such relationships revolve mostly around fulfilling leader and follower interests rather than those of the organisation. This prompted a conviction that the only way to true and lasting leadership are transformational relationships. The thinking was that this is because transformational relationships obtain a 'follower' motivation and commitment to organizational goals and productivity that transactional relationships cannot obtain.

Claims are that the reason transformational leadership achieves long lasting influence is because it transforms "follower" 'self interest into interest for the group through concern for a broader goal' (Rosener, 1990: 20). It is claimed that this is achieved mainly by reaching 'the souls of others in a fashion which raises human consciousness, builds meanings and inspires human intent ...' (Dillard, 1995 in Leithwood, et al, 1999: 9). Activities said to constitute such transformational effects include vision building; goal establishment; intellectual stimulation; individualized support; demonstration of high performance expectations; creation of a productive organizational culture; modeling of best practices and important organizational values; development of structures that foster participation in decisions Leithwood, et al (1999); dispersed and democratic; invitational and consensual; visionary and optimistic; empowering and trusting; educative; consultative and respectful; inclusive and participatory; critical, sceptical and experimental (Bottery, 1992: 186, in Gold, et al, 2003: 128). These are said to result in leaders and followers raising one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). In school contexts such transformation comprises of:

> ... mobilizing commitment to explicit educational vision that is corporately agreed, coaching and mentoring designed to support individuals and increase leadership capacity generally; visible dispersal of leadership responsibility throughout the staff group whose members are trusted to initiate and complete tasks; and group decision-making that is highly participatory, open and democratic.
> (Gold, et al, 2003: 128)

Burns' insights have been so influential that they underpinned a large number of leadership scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s, including work by individuals such as Sergiovanni (1987); Rosener (1990); Coleman (1994); West-Burnham (1997),

Leithwood (1999); and Gold, et al. (2003). The appeal of the approach is so sizeable that it has generated the development of a long list of post transformational leadership models. Examples of models displaying transformational views include the principle-centered; the values–led contingency; and the invitational.

The *principle-centered models* are based on a view that leadership can only succeed if underpinned by transforming principles such as acceptance, patience, persuasion, gentleness, kindness, openness, compassion, confrontation, consistency and integrity (Covey, 1992).

Value–led contingency models emerged from a conviction that leadership effectiveness is determined more by follower value systems than it is by instrumental managerial concerns (Day, et al, 2000). For Greenfield (1986 in Gold et al, 2003; 128), particularly pertinent about this model for educational leadership is that, in reality, school leaders are essentially 'value-carriers'. At the core of these models is 'a particular vision for the school shaped by a particular set of values, knowledge, qualities, skills or competencies' (Day, et al, 2000: 172).

Framing *invitational models'* is a belief that leadership becomes effective if it communicates to 'followers' a message that conveys to them that they are regarded as worthwhile, able, and responsible (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Underpinning the model are premises of 'optimism – the belief that people have untapped potential for growth and development; respect – the recognition that each person is an individual; trust – the ability to trust others to behave in concert and in turn, as leaders, to behave with integrity; and intention – the capacity to be actively supportive, caring and encouraging' (Day, et al, 2000: 172)..

The different paths by the models towards 'follower' transformation point to a lack of consensus on what is basically transforming about leadership. Also, despite the popularity of transformational leadership approaches, research findings on the effects of transformational leadership on productivity, including academic performance, are contradictory. For example, whilst Rosener's (1990) studies undertaken in business settings attributed increased productivity to this approach, research in educational settings on the other hand

> offers modest amounts of evidence for the contributions of such leadership to teacher-perceived student outcomes even though the form of leadership has, however, been found to impact on a variety of teachers' psychological states, for example professional commitment and job satisfaction, that impact on student learning.
> (Leithwood, 1999: 9)

Further illustrating the contradictions are findings that while transformational leadership contributes positively to:

> ... such institutional-level effects as organizational learning, and has good repercussions for teachers' professional commitment and job satisfaction, and possibly for retention, there is no evidence to suggest that, *on its own,* it brings about anything but modest improved consequences for pupil outcomes.
> (Gold, et al, 2003: 128-9)

Contradictions like these have been prompting authors such as Gold, et al (2003) to caution against sole reliance on transformational leadership for organisational/school effectiveness, including academic performance.

The conclusion drawn from the review of traditional approaches to the study of leadership effectiveness is that none of the approaches offers a helpful foundation for developing the desired understanding in this study. Research has not been conclusive about traits, behavioural dimensions, organizational situations and links between behavioural dimensions and organisational situations associated with leadership effectiveness. Also, despite the popularity of transformational leadership approaches among educational leadership researchers, studies have not identified a relationship between the approaches and academic performance. My view was that probably at the heart of the failure to provide satisfactory explanations on educational leadership effectiveness is the tendency by traditional approaches to view leadership not only as an attribute linked to positions of authority but also as a given imperative. The view was that what holds true for a particular imperative may not necessarily hold true for the others. The failure of traditional theories for offering a satisfactory understanding on which to develop the required understanding in this study led to a decision to search for supplementary understanding from emergent approaches.

Emergent approaches

Emergent approaches to the study of leadership provide alternative theories aimed at addressing shortcomings identified in the traditional theories. At the forefront of the alternative approaches are two main schools of thoughts. One of these approaches calls for eclecticism in the study of leadership effectiveness while the other is of the conviction that leadership can only be fully effective if dispersed throughout given organisation.

The eclectic leadership approaches

These approaches provided a very persuasive supplement for developing a better understanding of the relationship between school leadership and school culture. Part of the persuasion was brought about by Gold, et al's (2003) claims that there is no evidence to suggest that, *on its own,* the much acclaimed transformational leadership approach brings about good academic performance. Further prompting the leaning towards the eclectic approaches were claims by the same author that the traditional approaches are, in reality, by no means 'pure' (Gold, et al., 2003). This is because even though each of the approaches 'has as its premise a different, primary form or source of leadership influence, secondary use of many sources of influence are likely in all' (Leithwood, et al, 1998: 20). What this meant to me was that while the contingency theories were to offer a starting point for exploring leadership in this study, the explorations needed to be informed more by gathered data than a predetermined leadership theoretical framework. The feeling was that there was a possibility that all or most of the approaches stood to contribute towards the development of the desired understanding.

Dispersed leadership

The reason this approach also informed data gathering and analysis in this study is its conceptualisation of leadership. The conceptualisation challenges taken for granted views that organizational leadership resides in individuals occupying official positions of authority and which, as a result, perceive other sources of leadership as illegitimate, undesirable, and unpredictable (Dunlap and Goldman, 1991). Instead, this approach calls for a shift towards 'a conception of leadership that is neither imbedded in the actions of any single individual, but rather dispersed or shared throughout the school

and, as such, available to everyone' (Gold, 2003: 128). What was particularly persuasive about this approach is its objection to a view of organisational members as being necessarily of lesser abilities and therefore perpetually dependent on official leadership 'expertise' for carrying out all their duties (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). All in all, this approach not only challenges studies framed by traditional views of leadership as an attribute embedded in single individuals but also the orthodoxy of bureaucratic, rational and entrepreneurial models often espoused in government policies and documents.

What has been lending substance to the challenges on traditional conceptualisations of leadership as a hierarchical process were widespread findings that effective organisations tend to depict flatter, rather than hierarchical, models of social influence (Bennett, 1991; Bryman, 1992; Eisenhower, in Clemmer and McNeal, 1989). Of particular importance about this approach is that it further informed conceptualisation in this study of *leadership as basically being about influence. What this meant was that while influence 'ideally' resides in individuals occupying hierarchical positions, in reality this may not necessarily be the case and that exploration in this study therefore needed to be alert to such a possibility.* This view was one other reason that resulted in a decision to begin the leadership exploration by identifying influential individuals through a short questionnaire before exploring that which contributed to the influential capacity and perception.

Further persuasive about this approach were claims by education leadership authors such as Coleman (1994: 61) which for some time have been stating that in reality leadership in schools is often 'assumed by or dispersed to others, including deputy heads, team leaders, curriculum leaders and class teachers'. However, also of caution in relation to this approach is that, like all other approaches, dispersed leadership has its own dilemmas. One such dilemma revolves:

> ... around tensions created in developing a clear vision for a school based upon existing sets of core values held by the head-teacher and building a cohesive staff team actively involved in its development, not all of whom may share those values. The basis of this dilemma is the extent to which both similar and dissimilar values can be reconciled (Day, et al. 2000; 149).

Another dilemma relating to the view of leadership effectiveness as residing in dispersed leadership is that this view is yet to agree on individuals with whom 'principals' need to share power. For example, Coleman's list of individuals with whom principals 'share power' indicates that the hierarchical view of leadership continues to inform even those sectors subscribing to dispersed leadership. Further alluding to the continued hierarchical view is the statement that it is 'principals' that need to share leadership with others in schools. The statement still assumes that principals are, by virtue of their official positions, leaders or influential beings in schools. Also, even if this were true in terms of the managerial imperative, it would not necessarily imply that the cultural imperative necessarily resides together with the managerial.

A search for models of dispersed leadership led to an article by Mothapho (*) describing a form of leadership he referred to as the 'collective leadership' of the African National Congress (ANC). Mothapo's claims are that the organization owes its success to collective leadership and that such collectivity comprises of:

- organizational communication that reports significant developments to all members in a deliberate effort to unite and organize members;
- unitary leadership and cadreship through elected leadership;
- organizational discipline advocating adherence to organizational principles and objectives;
- management of internal contradictions through a culture of open debates, constructive criticism and self criticism;
- (political) education providing members with information and skills that have leadership's skills and information complementing one another; and
- revolutionary ethics.

CONCLUSION

Efforts at improving academic performance in HDATSS in the past decade do not seem to have achieved the desired effects. One contributor to the failure has been failure by research, policy makers and practitioners to focus on school cultures as fundamental enablers for academic performance. Reviewed literature indicates that at the core of this failure are disabling coneptualisations and a multiplicity of contradictory theories.

Resulting in the disablement has been traditional conceptualisations of school cultures as comprising only of behavioural norms. These disregard subsequent conceptualisations pointing to underpinning values, beliefs and assumptions as being of importance in the conceptualisations if better understanding of school cultures is to be achieved. A shortcoming of such traditional conceptualisations is that they result in methodologies that provide information that insufficiently informs school culture related practice. A point of departure in this study therefore was a conceptualisation that incorporated all levels of cultures in a conviction that this would go a step further towards achieving the desired understanding of school cultures.

Also seen as inhibiting academic performance improvement in HDATSS are studies that have not been explicitly linking school leadership to school culture and/or vice versa. At the core of this failure was found to be conceptualisations that continue to view leadership as a concept fundamentally aligned to formal positions of authority. Such conceptualisations ignore the influential essence of leadership and, as a result, fail to focus on individuals that actually influence formations of particular school cultures in sample schools. Related to 'disabling' conceptualisations has been the tendency to view school leadership from singular points of view. This tendency has been depriving practice and policy of findings that would contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between school culture and school leadership in all contexts in general and in HDATSS in particular.

In view of the above shortcomings, a stance opted for in this study was one which Lumby (2003: 160) refers to as:

shifts in the patterns of culture and values – what is of importance, whose needs are foremost - and patterns of power … – and the effects of the suggested shifts on leadership …

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCESS

This chapter reports on the design and process of the study conducted on the relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership in HDATSS. As already indicated, the purpose of undertaking this study was to develop better understanding of school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS and in the process develop better understanding of leadership associated with the formation of such cultures. The report is undertaken in two sections, the first of which is on the design while the second discusses the journey travelled through the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This section begins with a brief interrogation of the conceptions that informed the selection of the methodology through which this study was conducted, and then proceeds with a more detailed discussion of the methodology.

Underpinning conceptions

The decision to interrogate my conceptions of research and humanity before selecting the methodology by means of which I was to conduct this study was informed by a view that unless I precede the selection by interrogating the conceptions, my research would lack coherence and integrity (Cohen, et al: 2000). Emerging from the interrogation were eclectic personal conceptions at all levels. Consequently, even though explorations conducted in this study were basically inclined towards qualitative and subjective research orientations, the explorations also incorporated quantitative and objective research orientations.

The ontology

What came to light from the interrogations was that my conception at this level was fundamentally nominal in nature but also tended to encompass realism. Informing this orientation was an argument that even though meanings attached to human behaviour are basically determined by consciousness and cognition, the behaviour itself is an actual reality 'out there' occurring independently of meanings resulting from consciousness and cognition. Emerging from this was that even though different people construe the world differently, some behavioural aspects are 'real entities with a life of their own' (Cohen, 2000: 9). For example, even though the analogy is probably too simplistic, a particular child jumping over a stone will be seen as a child jumping over a stone by all who observe the event. The jump therefore can be measured objectively for variables such as height or length. This is even though the measurements themselves and, crucially, the interpretations of the jumper's intentions may mean different things to different observers.

What this meant in relation to this study was that even though culture and leadership are social constructions bound to be construed differently by different participants and researchers, failure to acknowledge some realism about the concepts would reduce the study's integrity. The thinking was that such a failure would shut the door against issues which, if accessed both subjectively and objectively, would provide better understanding of the concepts of focus in this study. This conceptualisation led to a decision that if full understanding of issues being researched in this study was to be developed, data collection would then need to be triangulated, as discussed in more detail in the section on 'triangulation' below. It was felt, for example, that leadership is a real occurrence 'out there ' which needed to be identified objectively while its meaning to participants needed to be explored subjectively. As a result, the identification of leaders at the sample schools was conducted by means of the objective questionnaire tool, while subjective perceptions of the leadership were explored by the subjective instruments of observations and interviews.

The epistemology

Also influencing the selection of the methodology was an epistemology that was as eclectic as was the case with the underpinning ontology. As a result, although fundamentally anti-positivist, the epistemology also incorporated positivism. This meant that although critical of the positivist sweeping stance that human behaviour is governed by universal laws and therefore can be empirically investigated in the same way that inanimate objects can be, my skepticism was cautious. Demanding such a caution was a conviction that, granted, certain aspects of human behaviour are real and therefore empirically accessible, their interpretations are socially constructed. What this means is that access to the meanings of behaviours can therefore only be achieved by means of tools equipped to explore subjectivity. It is therefore also for this reason that leaders at the sample schools were, as already indicated, identified by means of questionnaires while the exploration of what contributed to perceptions of leadership was conducted by means of observations and interviews.

Human nature

Similarly, views on human nature underpinning the selection of the methodology for this study were conceptions that were as eclectic as was the case with the two preceding underpinning conceptions. The view was that even though humans generally use their free will to create or respond to their environments, this is to some extent governed by some 'universal' constraints. For example, even though school populations exercise their free will to decide when to arrive at school or, for that matter, whether to attend classes or not, such decisions are influenced to varying degrees by issues such as school rules, regulations, expected outcomes and school leadership effectiveness.

The methodology

Emerging from the above three underpinnings was a call for a methodology that needed to be relativist and interpretive. Answering such a call was ethnography and grounded theory, as described below.

Ethnography

In addition to the above underpinnings, informing the choice of ethnography for conducting this study were gaps identified in preceding related studies. The first of such gaps was with regard to the research approaches of these studies, most of which have been quantitative in nature. Resulting from such approaches have been 'snapshot findings' which were very helpful in providing macro pictures of school cultures and leadership in schools characterized by good academic performance. Examples of such studies include those reported in international literature by researchers such as Weightman and Mortimore (1994) while locally reported such studies include those by researchers such as Christie (2001) and Malcolm et al (1999). While findings from these pioneering studies are all consensual on the critical role and nature of school culture and associated leadership for school effectiveness, including academic performance, the studies have not yet provided micro descriptions of these aspects.

What this means is that while the studies have been very helpful in providing better understanding of effectiveness in historically disadvantaged schools, the studies have not yet provided sufficient information for improvement practices in such schools. For example, while most of the studies have been pointing to teacher and student commitment as a contributor to good academic performance, none of the studies has provided information on how the schools' cultures enable such commitment. Similarly, while the studies have been hinting at features characterizing leadership associated with such school cultures, the studies have been silent on the leadership processes. Stoll and Fink's (1999) advice is that if school effectiveness research is to be helpful for school improvement endeavours, research will have to build on pathfinder snapshots and start focusing on gaining insights into how the *processes* and inner workings of the snapshots fit together.

The appropriateness of ethnography for this study therefore also lay in its ability to engage 'the world of everyday life' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 264). This was of particular importance for this study given that the focus was on gaining insights into concepts that constitute 'the everyday life' of schools which, in this case, refers to enabling school cultures and associated leadership for HDATSS. The methodology achieves the 'everyday' insights

> ... by paying to the most commonplace activities of daily life the attention usually accorded extraordinary events, (and) seeks to learn about them as phenomena in their own right (Garfinkel, 1967: 47).

The above was of particular importance for this study considering that the purpose of the research aimed at gaining insights into concepts that constitute 'the world of everyday life' and their impact on academic performance of the schools. To identify "taken-for-granted" assumptions characterizing the schools' cultures and the ways in which the schools' populations made their activities rationally accountable, the two ethnographic notions of 'indexicality' and 'reflexivity' were utilised. Indexicality refers to

> ...the ways in which actions and statements are related to the social contexts producing them; and to the way their meanings are shared by the participants but not necessarily stated explicitly. Indexical expressions are thus the designations imputed to a particular social occasion by the participants in order to locate the event in the sphere of reality.

While

> Reflexivity, on the other hand, refers to the way in which all accounts of social settings – descriptions, analyses, criticism, etc. – and the social settings occasioning them are mutually interdependent (op cit).

Issues that helped achieve both of the above included the:

- 'production of descriptive cultural knowledge' of the schools' populations;
- description of activities from the point of views of the members of the populations themselves;
- production of a list of features constitutive of the schools' membership;
- description and analysis of patterns of social interaction among the population;
- provisioning, as far as possible, of 'insider accounts'; and
- development of theory

(Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Also seen as appropriate regarding ethnography for this study was the methodology's potential to complement formal modelling processes by producing a form of "reality" testing on processes, thus providing a deep insight into the "sociality" in which social circumstances occur (http://www.poorbuthappy.com/ethnography/Handbook_Of_Ethnography?v=12i0). Enabling this about the methodology for this study was the protracted fieldwork that involved observations, chats and interviews with different people at the schools, and the examination of selected documents, and questionnaires. These enabled reality check by providing information that illustrated gaps between assumptions of either staff and students on one hand and the actual reality of the schools' cultures and leadership on the other, as was mostly the case at the school of poor academic performance. The latter is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Further relevant to ethnography for this study is its fundamentally qualitative nature. The reason qualitative research was viewed as appropriate for studying relationships of focus in this study was the potentiality of this approach to explore social interactions, which in this case related to culture and leadership. Necessitating qualitative research into social interactions is that the meanings of such interactions are, among other things:

- underpinned by people's thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, reasoning, motivations, meanings and feelings, and are therefore value bound;
- constructed by humans out of social situations and therefore handled through interpretive processes;
- socially situated, context-related, context-dependent and context-rich. To understand such concepts, researchers need to understand the context because situations affect behaviour and perspectives and *vice versa;*
- dependent on multiple, constructed and holistic realities; and
- time- and context-bound

(Cohen, et al, 2000).

Further necessitating qualitative investigation regarding the concepts is that their meanings and understandings can be accessed only through the eyes of participants because:

- the concepts are enacted deliberately, intentionally and creatively; and
- the situations in which they occur are unique.

As a result, the study of social concepts, as was the case in this study, needs to be:

- conducted in natural, uncontrived, real world settings with as little intrusiveness as possible by the researcher;
- have its data analysed continuously during the collection process; and
- theory generating or elaborating rather than hypothesis testing

(Cohen, et al, 2000).

The inductive-deductive dichotomy

What also made ethnography a methodology of choice for this study was the flexibility of the methodology, particularly in terms of inductive and deductive reasoning. Enabling the former is the underpinning premise that 'the truth' can be revealed only through grounding in data, thus making verification possible. However, even though basically framed by inductive reasoning, the study also incorporated a deductive process in its reasoning. Influencing the departure from the wholly inductive premise of ethnography was a conviction that to get to 'the truth', particularly when researching social issues, one needs to combine both forms of reasoning. The process of combining both forms of reasoning involves:

> ... a back-and-forth movement in which the investigator first operates inductively from observations to hypotheses, and then deductively from these hypotheses to their implications, in order to check their validity from the standpoint of compatibility with accepted knowledge. After revision, where necessary, these hypotheses are submitted to further test through the collection of data specifically designed to test their validity at the empirical level. This dual approach is the essence of the modern scientific method and marks the last stage of man's progress toward empirical science, a path that took him

through folklore, mysticism, dogma and tradition, casual observation, and finally to systematic observation (Mouly, 1978 in Cohen, et al, 2000: 4-5).

Further leading to the decision to incorporate deductive reasoning into the study was a yearning for findings that would be 'applicable' to a wider population of HDATSS. This is because one shortcoming of inductive reasoning is that, on its own, it is of little assistance, if any, for generalizations. To arrive at generalizations, inductive studies rely on findings captured from a large number of cases. The latter was not possible in this study. It was therefore felt that the inclusion of deductive reasoning would help generate at least transferability, if not entire generalisability, of findings emerging from this study.

To accommodate both forms of reasoning, data gathered through observations was continuously analysed as observations proceeded. Both observation and analysis were interspersed with literature review aimed at assessing the compatibility of emerging categories with accepted knowledge. This was the case, for example, when the 'community' category began emerging as a powerful feature of school culture at Fundiseka. This category had potential transferability as an enabling school culture feature for all HDATSS. At this stage it became important to develop an understanding of what it was that was enabling about communal consensus; how communities developed consensus and whether traditional communities developed consensus in the same way that modern organizations such as HDATSS did, or needed to. In short, deductions resulting from findings arrived at inductively did not only help inform further data collection, but also helped bring about some 'generalisability' into the findings.

Populations and samples

Comprising the school population were secondary schools in the KwaMashu education district out of which two sample schools of varying academic performance were selected: one in the KwaMashu Township, and the other at Ntuzuma Township. The pseudonym given to the former in the discussion that follows is Fundiseka Comprehensive High School, while the latter is referred to as Umzamo High School. Also comprising the population of study were the sample schools' teachers and

students. Initially it had been intended to include School Governing Bodies (SGB) as part of the population on the assumption that the bodies influence schools' cultures and were therefore part of leadership at the sample schools. This assumption was, however, proved faulty as data gathering proceeded and it became apparent that even though both schools maintained that they had SGBs, the bodies themselves were inactive in both schools. Neither of the schools had held an SGB meeting in the whole of 2002, the year in which data gathering commenced, nor had they done so as fieldwork proceeded during the first three months of 2003.

The decision to focus on secondary schools was that at the time this study was conducted only secondary schools wrote standardised examinations - the matriculation examinations. This decision was therefore prompted by a belief that the examination results would provide a relatively reliable yardstick of academic performance. Furthermore, the decision to study township schools as opposed to rural schools was itself influenced by an understanding that the former were generally performing poorly as opposed to the latter (Christie, 2001) and therefore were in greater need of improvement efforts.

The selection of Kwamashu/Ntuzuma townships over other townships was similarly influenced by a perception that, compared to other African townships in the Durban area, the townships were hit the hardest by the mid 1970s – early 1990s political unrest (Nxumalo, 1993). Prompting the selection of African schools over other historically disadvantaged schools - for example, those historically meant for the Indian and Coloured populations - was a perception that the former were historically more disadvantaged than schools historically designated for the other two 'racial' groups. A conclusion drawn from this perception was that findings from the worst hit schools would be more generalisable to all historically disadvantaged schools than would be the case if schools were selected from those less disadvantaged by the apartheid legacy. Influencing focus on schools situated in townships in the Durban area was, to a lesser degree, their easy accessibility from my place of work and residence. Such a consideration was necessary taking into consideration that data collection was going to involve driving to the schools on an almost daily basis for six months. Overall, schools in the two townships were further regarded as typical of other township schools in general.

Criteria for determining academic performances in the sampled schools included matriculation examination performance over a six year period stretching from 1996 to 2001. One of the schools was selected on the basis of its above average performance while the other was selected for its below average achievement amongst schools in the KwaMashu Educational District. The inclusion of a poorly performing school was aimed at sensitising data collection and analysis to differences between school cultures and associated leadership of schools of varying academic performances. To help ensure the reliability of the examination results, the advice of the district Superintendent Education Manager (SEM) was sought. The assumption was that his regular contact with the schools informed him about the reliability of the schools' performances much more than did published results. Such a measure was deemed necessary considering rampant claims that most schools manipulated their matriculation performance, for example through the gate-keeping practice discussed in Chapter 1.

One other criterion utilised for the sampling of schools was the degree to which the schools were perceived to be representative of the general population of HDATSS. A school identified as performing much better than all of the schools in the two townships was excluded from the study sample on the basis that it was perceived as not being very representative of the general HDATSS genre. Leading to this perception was that the school's tuition fee of R500.00 per annum compared to the R150.00 'charged' by most schools in the area was not the norm among the township schools. The former school's fee implied a wealthier clientele and therefore a better resourced school and a more supportive home background for the school's students. Including the former in the sample would therefore have defeated the purpose of this study of identifying and developing better understandings of non-material school-based determinants of academic performance in HDATSS. One other school whose performance was better than the sampled school was excluded on the basis of its 13 kilometres of added distance from the selected school. Furthermore, although located within the KwaMashu education administrative district, the school was actually situated in an informal settlement 'under strict control' of a particular political party. The thinking was that this variable might have brought about yet another contributor to the school's academic performance into the picture.

The sampling of class levels on which to administer questionnaires was based on the degree to which the levels represented familiarity or lack of familiarity with the schools' cultures and associated leadership. The Fundiseka sample, where the questionnaire was administered at the end of the year, consisted of students in Grades 8, 10 and 12. The intention was to ascertain the degree to which the students' responses were influenced by the students' length of enrolment at the school or the possibility of some other variable. Corresponding sampling was not undertaken for Umzamo. Militating against similarity in class sampling criterion was the school's high student turnover that had very few students enrolled at the school for periods longer than 3 years. The school's Grade 8 class was excluded on the basis that its stay at the school would be insufficient to yield reliable data considering that data was collected at the school at the beginning of the year. The Grade 9 and 10 classes were excluded on the basis that most were, similar to the Grade 8 class, newcomers. The questionnaire sample was, as a result, administered to only Grade 11 and 12 students on the basis that the classes comprised of students who had been at the school for periods that ranged from 1-6 years. This consideration was aimed at approximating both schools' samples in terms of length of enrolment at the schools.

Samples for interviews were comprised of individuals identified as being the most influential people at the sample schools. The purpose was to probe what the individuals felt constituted not only their capacities to exercise leadership at the schools, but also the capacities of the other identified leaders to do so. To countercheck the validity of information collected from the sample of leaders, focus group interviews were conducted with individuals randomly selected from the schools' populations. The randomness was, however, constrained by availability. For example, the teacher focus groups consisted of teachers who at the time of interviews had 'free' periods. Determining the Umzamo student focus group was their availability during periods scheduled for tests but who at the time of interviews were not writing. This consideration was similar to that of the teacher sample in that the teacher sample consisted of teachers who were no invigilating at the time. The sampling also involved selecting students identified as leaders through the questionnaire. The Fundiseka student focus group interview was conducted on students who were attending classes during the autumn school break. Also, the group

similarly comprised of students identified through the questionnaire as leaders at the school.

Triangulation

As already stated, emerging from the nature of the study, together with research conceptions determining the choice of the methodology for conducting the study, was a conviction that data gathering needed to be triangulated if it was to provide reliable data. The reliability was of crucial importance taking into consideration that the purpose was to provide findings that would contribute to understanding school improvement efforts aimed at improving academic performance. The instruments that constituted the triangulation included observations, mainly non-participant, but also occasionally participant; semi-structured interviews; informal chats; questionnaires; and document analysis. The triangulation was to provide concurrent validity (Ary, 1999). This was seen to be of particular importance in a study that was qualitative in nature and which therefore exposed data to selective filtering through personal experience and bias and, as such, was susceptible to misrepresentation.

Observations

Observations constituted the main data gathering tool in this study. Data gathered in this manner informed, and were themselves informed, by data collected by means of the other tools. Categories that emerged from the observations, for example, informed informal conversations with the schools' members in search of explanations on puzzling observations.

Observed activities which provided data on the schools' cultures and leadership included morning assemblies; school yard, informal staff room and formal classroom conversations and interactions; meetings; extra-mural activities; and special occasions such as the Fundiseka ex-principal's farewell party, Sports Bonanza and whole school development workshop and the Umzamo inter-house athletics competitions. The observations were scheduled to initially focus on the school's culture before focusing on the schools' leadership. However, as data collection progressed it soon became apparent that the two concepts were in reality inseparable and actually occurred side

by side to inform one another. As a result, the two ended up being observed concurrently.

The observations were mainly non-participant, except on five occasions when participant observations were undertaken in the form of tests and examination invigilation: twice at both schools. The latter provided opportunities for ascertaining the degree to which student behaviour observed in the presence of teachers was 'ingrained' in a normative way or depended on constant teacher control. One of the participant occasions involved taking a picture of a really offensive piece of graffiti splashed above the chalkboard of one classroom at Umzamo and which had been adorning the wall since data gathering commenced two months previously. The activity provided an opportunity to compare students' response to the photographing, taking into account claims by the school's teachers that the students were not very concerned with 'moral' issues and were not particularly responsive to correctional efforts. The students proved the teachers wrong, at least on this occasion, as they pleaded robustly that the graffiti not be photographed, maintaining that such a photograph would give their school a bad reputation. Ensuing negotiation had the students promising to remove the graffiti and begging that the photograph be destroyed. The students kept their promise and had removed the graffiti before my next visit to the school, thus 'refuting' their teachers' claims and suggesting a possibility that the reason the students were not rule-following, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, was probably because nobody bothered with ensuring that this was not the case.

The reason non participant observations were opted for even though participant observation is generally considered first choice for ethnography was linked to the broad focus of the study. Participant observations would have prevented observer spontaneity by restricting movement from one activity to another as prompted by insights from emerging data. This would have deprived the study of opportunities for observing a number of activities that stood to provide further enlightening data. Linked to the non participant decision was time limitation in that data had to be gathered over a period of six months at Fundiseka and over three months at Umzamo.

Also determining the nature of observations in this study was one other gap identified in preceding school effectiveness research regarding the tendency to focus on school level variables to the exclusion of classroom level variables. Findings from such studies present incomplete pictures which provide limited assistance to school improvement 'given that analyses demonstrate that most of the variation among schools is due to classroom variation' (Stoll and Fink, 1999: 30. The gap prompted a decision to conduct observations at both school and classroom levels in the hope that the combination would provide a more complete picture of the relationship between the schools' academic performance, cultures and leadership.

School level observations

Initial observations at this level were unstructured and focused on the most obvious manifestations of school culture - the visible and audible - for example, the state of buildings and grounds and patterns of behaviour, speech and interactions. Structuring was made as observations progressed and categories began emerging. For example, when it became apparent that behaviour at Fundiseka was consensual, it became necessary for observations to assess the degree of consensus and the 'cause' of the consensus. Umzamo could then serve as a point of comparison. One other form of structuring came about as a result of consultations with my supervisor where at one consultation I had commented on the relaxed manner in which students moved from one lesson to the other. The impression gained at this stage was of a lack of discipline. The supervisor's question on whether the relaxation involved 'dodging' classes led to a structuring aimed at assessing whether this was the case. The structuring proved to be quite useful in that it revealed that the relaxed manner pointed to a relaxed but *purposeful* culture. At no time did the relaxation point to a desire to avoid succeeding classes. Instead, it appeared to give students a necessary 'revival' break of about 5 minutes when taking into consideration the robustness in their classes compared to the situation at Umzamo where time was allegedly 'saved' by not having students moving to different locations at the end of periods.

Classroom level observations

The purpose of classroom observations was to compare cultures observed at classroom levels with those observed at school level. Although observations at this level were also mainly unstructured, the initial observations were semi-structured

along the lines of an instrument developed by Moos for class culture observations (Owens, 1998: 181). The instrument consists of the following categories:

(i) Stress on competition
(ii) Emphasis on rules
(iii) Supportive behaviour
(iv) The extent of innovative activities.

Newer categories emerged as observations progressed including, for example, the degree of participative behaviour and the nature of interactions between teachers and students, and amongst students themselves.

Questionnaires

Data for identifying influential individuals at the schools was gathered by means of two sets of short structured questionnaires (see Appendices 3 and 4). One of the sets was administered on teachers while the other was administered on students. In addition to biographical details, the questionnaire required respondents to identify teachers, students and community members perceived as being influential with respect to student and teacher attitudes and actions. The difference between the two instruments is that in addition to enquiring about the identities of teachers perceived as having influence on student attitudes and actions, the teacher questionnaire also enquired about teachers perceived as being influential on other teachers' attitudes and actions.

Interviews

One other set of tools utilised for gathering information for the study included semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

Unstructured informal interviews/chats were entered into with school community members whenever opportunity and need arose. The chats helped elicit information and explanations on observed cultural and leadership aspects needing clarification. An example of such chats was with the group of male teachers that had been observed spending all of their tea breaks gathered under the shade of a particular tree next to the main gate. What was learned in this chat was that the practice began as a deterrent at a

visit he had undertaken with me for a day of my field work at Fundiseka (see Appendix 6).

Analysis

Data was analysed by means of a framework associated with grounded theory formulation, as described below, and further enriched by visual images

Grounded theory

Emerging from conceptions and concerns discussed above was a view that if this study was to achieve the desired outcome, there was a need not only for a methodology that was qualitative but also one that generated theory grounded on gathered data rather than on advance hypotheses (Johnston, 1994). An advantage of grounded theory for this study was that, being 'systematically derived from actual data related' to phenomenon under study, it stood to provide guidelines for practice related to the study phenomena and context (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 23). The approach facilitates this through a process in which 'theories are inductively generated from robust data patterns, elaborated through the construction of plausible models, and explained in terms of their explanatory coherence' (Haig, 1995: 2) as opposed to the 'hypothetico- deductive practice of testing "great man" sociological theories' (Haig, 1995: 1). The lure for grounded theory for this study therefore lay in the approach's 'problem-solving' capacity derived from the rigor of the methodology (op cit).

Guiding the analysis, therefore, were processes designed to:

- generate rather than test theory;
- give the research process the rigor necessary to make the theory 'good' science;
- help the analyst break through the biases and assumptions brought to and which could be developed during the research process; and
- provide grounding, build the density, and develop the sensitivity and integration needed to generate a rich, tightly woven, explanatory theory that approximates the reality it presents.

(Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 57)

Guiding the analysis of data collected by means of interviews and observations was Schein's (1997, cited by Lumby, 2003: 163) observation that 'culture is not easily decoded, embedded as it is in the thinking, actions and artefacts of a community'. Taking a cue from this analysis meant focusing on identifying what people felt was important, and what they valued and allocated additional resources such as time. 'In this way it was hoped to move beyond the rhetoric which is the danger of self-reported data, to locate values as signalled by those activities which attracted both espoused commitment and commitment in action' (Argyris and Schon, 1974 as cited by Lumby, 2003: 163). In response to this advice, the analysis of data from interviews and observation involved the:

- location of patterns and themes;
- checking of themes against observed actions; and
- articulation of assumptions underlying leadership actions.

(Strauss and Corbin, 1990)

Visual images

Visual images have been found to provide a good source of analysis, particularly for narrative and interpretive purposes (Mitchell & Weber, 1998). This led to a decision that even though analysis by means of grounded theory strategies was appropriate for providing the desired understanding, pictures of participants and maps of schools be also incorporated to further enrich the analysis. It was hoped that this would help achieve a fuller understanding of the relationship focused on in this study.

Ethical considerations dictated that analysis by means of pictures not be utilised for Umzamo. As a result, only a map of the school and graffiti was utilised for analysis in relation to the Umzamo school culture while pictures were also utilised for analysis purpose at Fundiseka. This decision was prompted by the fact that the appearance of Umzamo was similar to many other township schools and therefore its image would not lead to identification of this sample school. Maps were utilised for narrative

purposes for both schools. However, while pictures were utilised for interpretive purposes for Fundiseka serving the same purpose for Umzamo was graffiti.

Reliability and validity

A shortcoming of ethnographic observations lies in their inability to consistently acquire deep understanding of cultures under observation (Schein, 1985). To overcome this shortcoming, data gathering was triangulated, as described above. Further increasing reliability in this study was the collection of data over a long period of time. This helped decrease the possibility of collecting unreliable data which sometimes occurs when data gathering takes place over a short time. In this case researchers end up with data resulting from participants having put on 'a show'. The length of time helped avoid this possibility by getting participants so used to my observations that they ended up carrying out their daily tasks and activities as they normally would do even when not being observed. That the latter was achieved became evident when I started getting responses indicating that I was being regarded as one of the school community when requesting permission to undertake certain activities. One such response was by the Fundiseka principal to my request to take photographs of the school. His actual response was: 'Hhayi khululeka Mapholoba! Sesikuthatha njengomunye wethu' (Feel free Mapholoba (Mapholoba is praise name for the Ngcobo clan)! We now regard you as one of us).

To achieve validity, the study relied on continuous analysis interspersed with literature review. The insight that this provided helped identify further areas for observation and helped inform the construction of interview schedules.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues that were attended to pertained to those that relate to research in general and those that pertained to the nature of this study in particular. The former was with reference to the right to dignity, knowledge and confidentiality. A full discussion of the process is provided in the section dealing with the 'journey and challenges' faced during the process of this study, below. Ethical issues regarding the nature of this study related to what Schein (1985) maintains confronts studies on organizational culture in general. These involved taking extra effort with analysis in order to avoid

inopportune implications should the analysis of the schools' cultures be incorrect. Included in the implications would be the hampering of intellectual and scientific progress in related fields and the obstruction of school improvement efforts should the schools decide to base their efforts on the findings of the study. To avoid all of the above, great pains were taken over analysis, for example by conducting a 'findings workshop' with both schools to compare findings with participant perceptions.

One other ethical issue attended to related to the 'findings workshop' at Umzamo when the school principal showed signs of not being ready for the workshop. The principal had indicated that he feared that the workshop might bring to the fore issues that might cause trouble at the school, considering that the school had in the past experienced unrest that had resulted in his displacement. The displacement was as a result of class boycotts and vandalism in response to claims that the principal was misusing school fees. The request for the workshop was then withdrawn as the principal conveyed his fears, only to have him subsequently grant permission after pondering over my explanations on the workshop. Further persuading him to grant the permission was that no attempt had been made to 'push' for the workshop. Conveying this to him was my comment that I would not want to see my study taking blame for problems the school might experience in the near future.

Limitations of the study

Explorations aimed at developing better understanding of the relationship between academic performances, school culture and school leadership in HDATSS were in this study conducted in only two schools of varying academic performance. The size of the sample means that findings in this study are not generalisable to the rest of HDATSS with great confidence. To help overcome this 'limitation', analysis involved a reasoning that combined both inductivity and deductivity. While the strength of the former lay in findings emerging from gathered data, the latter helped draw conclusions from the findings on implications for the wider population of HDATSS.

Also threatening limitation on the integrity of this study were time and financial constraints. The constraints had data collection taking place over a period of six months instead of the generally recommended ethnographic period of 9-12 months

(Glaser & Strauss, 1978). To help overcome this shortcoming, data gathering was as robust as it could be without appearing to be harassing. Clarification on observation data was, for example, sought as soon after the observations as possible. Furthermore, the fact that data gathering was taking place concurrently at the two sample schools of varying academic performance helped sensitise data gathering and analysis to what might have otherwise taken longer to fit together or make sense of.

Another limitation of this study is linked to its ethnographic methodology. Even though the methodology suited the purpose of the study almost perfectly, the disadvantage of ethnography is that it occurs over a protracted period of time. This sometimes leaves observed participants feeling uncomfortable, tense, resentful or harassed (http://www.poorbuthappy.com/ethnography/Handbook_Of_Ethnography?v=12i0). To reduce participant discomfort, observations were scheduled in such a way that they would not be confined to the same individuals or groups of individuals for long, continuous periods of time. For example, observations moved from one staffroom to another and from one classroom to another and at times focused solely on events occurring outside classrooms and staffrooms. One other means of reducing observee 'fatigue' related to note taking. Initially, field notes were taken continuously and concurrently with observations. This was discontinued when it became apparent that the practice was unsettling to some observees. Conveying the discomfort was a question by one of the teachers who jokingly cautioned her colleagues to refrain from a prank they were engaging in because: 'Miss will record it'. Following this comment, a decision was taken to take notes as discreetly as possible, for example, in classrooms that were not occupied during breaks, or by just jotting down key words I would then expand on later. This was particularly the case in relation to staff room observations than it was regarding classroom observations. A limitation of this is the possibility that some important data was inevitably 'lost'. It is, however, hoped that the length of time over which observations took place made up for data lost through the need to adopt measures that did not 'threaten' participant life' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 264).

This section discusses experiences and challenges faced during the process of this study, together with strategies that helped 'confront' the challenges.

Literature review

Although the literature review in this study commenced prior to fieldwork, not all of the review was undertaken at this juncture as is often the case with research. Instead, the review was undertaken throughout data collection and analysis whenever issues called for it. That the literature review did not preempt fieldwork and analysis was because the review was not in search of a theoretical framework or a hypothesis for testing. Necessitating the review at the start of the study was a need to generate a good understanding of, and operationalisation of, the central concepts of inquiry; find direction with the formulation of the research problem and questions; facilitate selection and construction of a methodology that would be appropriate for the purposes of this study; and provide a fair foundation for initial observations. Great care was taken that the literature review at this stage was not so extensive that categories would be formulated even before data gathering commenced, and in so doing desensitise data collection to emerging issues. Reviews undertaken as data collection progressed assisted bring about better understandings of issues and categories emerging from the ongoing data gathering and analysis. For example, when data began hinting at communality as a source of enablement for the Fundiseka culture, it became necessary to review literature on communities. This review helped sensitize continuing data collection to other features of communities.

Such a literature review helped develop skills required for qualitative inquiry including, for example, the need 'to step back and analyze situations, to recognize and avoid bias, to obtain valid and reliable data, and to think abstractly' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 50).

> To do these, a qualitative researcher requires theoretical and social sensitivity, the ability to maintain analytical distance while at the same time drawing upon past experience and theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen ...
> (op cit).

In brief, the surveyed literature helped:

- stimulate theoretical sensitivity,
- provide a knowledge of philosophical writings and existing theories that provide ways of approaching and interpreting data,
- provide secondary sources of data,
- stimulate questions,
- direct theoretical sampling, and
- provide supplementary validation

(Strauss and Corbin, 1990:50-55).

Access

The literature review helped sensitise to sampling issues that needed attention, for example, if the sampling was to be representative (Ary, 1999). Once sampling had been accomplished, I set about gaining access to the sample schools. Access took place at two levels. Firstly, it occurred at the physical and superficial level, and then proceeded onto a deeper level of 'emotional' acceptance.

Physical access

Physical access to the two sample schools was requested in writing, firstly from the Regional Research Office (see Appendix 7) and then from the schools (see Appendix 8).The letter to the Regional Office was posted while letters to the sample schools were hand delivered. The decision to deliver the letters to the schools in person was prompted by a wish to gain contact with the schools prior to fieldwork; familiarize myself with directions to the schools; and make it possible for the schools to ask in person whatever enquiries they might have had regarding my study.

The manner in which the two schools responded to requests for access provided initial data on the differences between the two schools' cultures and associated leadership. The first school to be approached was Fundiseka. This was because, being selected on the basis of good academic performance, data collection was going to commence and last longer at this school. When Fundiseka was first approached it was with an assumption that one visit would be sufficient for the purpose of acquiring access. However, contrary to this assumption, the process involved four visits over a period of three school months. The first visit had the principal stating that although he personally did not have any objections to me conducting the study at the school, he could not grant me access without first consulting the school's Senior Management Team (SMT). A subsequent telephone enquiry about the SMT response had the principal requesting that my proposed study be presented in person to the team so the team could be in a position to grant informed access or denial, whatever the case would be.

However, the presentation still did not elicit the hoped for access, nor did it elicit denial. Instead, the SMT made its own request that the proposed study be presented to the whole staff or its representatives in order to let the staff decide on the access fate. The SMT's caution stemmed from a fear that staff might confuse the study with the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) Programme which was being piloted in certain schools at that time and which seemed to be meeting with resistance from certain teacher union quarters. The fear that the study might be confused with WSE was because both involved class visits, and it was these visits that formed the basis for the rejection of the WSE project. The SMT felt that staff needed to be reassured that the class visits would not be about evaluations but about observing classroom culture and leadership and therefore not about subject knowledge and/or teaching methods.

The opposite took place at Umzamo where the principal happily granted access for the study on the very first visit without consultation with staff. Prompting such a response was an erroneous perception by the principal after the nature and purpose of this study had been explained to him. The explanation made him believe that the study would be a 'life-saver' for him/the school. Of particular interest to the principal was the explanation that even though part of focus in this study was leadership, the conceptualisation of leadership did not necessarily embrace him or other individuals

holding positions of formal authority. Instead, it referred to any individual with influence over other school members' attitudes and actions. The principal's immediate response was that the school needed such a study because it had experienced problems which he thought resulted from such (dispersed) leadership! One of the problems of such leadership, he maintained, had led to his previous three-year displacement from which he had returned the previous year.

What's in it for us?

A number of comments made by some of the participants prior to and as data collection commenced gave the impression that the participants expected something in return for 'inconveniences' experienced from activities related to the fieldwork. What these participants seemed to be asking was: 'What's in it for us?' This was even though I had given intentions to disseminate findings in this study through publications and my teaching and had also stated that I hoped such dissemination would help inform related practice. Remarks by certain participants indicated that the participants hoped for more tangible rewards and which would be of immediate benefit to them and their schools.

Such expectations at Umzamo were conveyed by comments by participants that they viewed this study as a sort of 'deliverance'. For example, the school principal stated that he felt that findings in this study would 'fix' things for the school in that they would expose the role played by dispersed leadership towards the school's problems. On the other hand, for a few vocal teachers, the hoped for salvation was going to be in the exposition of what was wrong with the school's leadership. As data collection progressed it became evident that by 'leadership' the individuals were referring mostly to the school principal, but also to staff, such as the SMT, in formal positions of authority. It also became apparent that the teachers making such comments were not, for one reason or another, in the principal's good books. A remark made by one of the teachers was that he hoped 'they' (people in situations of official positions of authority at the school) would get to learn about their 'wrong doings' from the findings, and repent. Comments such as this posed one other challenge in that it was not always easy to find a way of responding in a manner that, while encouraging respondents to share their feelings, did not encourage 'gossip'. It is possible that the

latter caution resulted in some valuable data being lost in this study in that in some situations I failed to provide the necessary prompts for further 'expositions'. However, it is hoped that the protracted period of data collection helped make up for this possible deficiency.

The airing of 'reward' expectations by the Fundiseka community differed from that of Umzamo's in that the Fundiseka community openly requested assistance it perceived I was in a position of providing. For example, the young teacher who chaired the 'access' meeting and who was later identified as the most influential individual at the school, had stated during the meeting that he hoped that staff would benefit from my university teaching experience one way or the other. As fieldwork progressed, a number of teachers did approach me in relation to this expectation and either enquired about teacher programmes at the university or asked for assistance with assignments related to their studies. One such form of assistance involved getting relevant literature from the university library for a teacher who needed the literature for his masters' dissertation proposal. Another such request was made by a Grade 12 student who required information on financial assistance for further studies at university. The student shared with his class the book with this information I had provided him.

Acceptance

Once data gathering commenced it became evident that for an ethnographic study access requires much more than physical access. What became apparent at this stage was that the biggest challenge was to get participants to be so familiar with my presence that they regarded my activities as part of the schools' everyday life, not as an intrusion into their privacy. Such 'access' was necessary because it was important for the purposes of this study that the participants acted naturally and normally. This was only going to be possible if the participants did not feel the need to act for, or be constrained, by being conscious of being observed. Although participants had not denied access, there were cases at the commencement of fieldwork when participants gave the impression that they were actually 'acting up' for 'the study' (see Fieldwork Notes in Appendix 9).

To help reduce such 'risks', data was gathered in as discreet a manner as possible. For example, class visits were unscheduled in the sense that requests were not made for each visit. Instead, teachers whose classes would be visited during the fieldwork were made aware that I might simply arrive at any time. To obtain the required access, explanations were provided for the necessity of such visits - that they would result in observations that were more enlightening than if scheduled. Such arrangements and explanations helped ensure that the teachers would conduct their classes and interact with students as they normally would when not being observed.

Data collection

Data collection took place over a period of six months at Fundiseka and over a period of three months at Umzamo. The reason the process was longer at the former school was the view that, having been selected for its good academic performance, the school had more to offer towards the development of the desired understanding (Refer to Tables 3 and 4 below for numerical breakdown of the visits, interviews and observations by 'shadowing'). This was because of major concern in this study was the identification and exploration of styles of leadership associated with school cultures that support good academic performance. The inclusion of the school of poor academic performance in the sample had therefore been purely for comparative and sensitization purposes.

Table 3: Breakdown of fieldwork activities at Fundiseka

No. of Visits	No. of interviews	Shadowing
100 days	Principal 1 Deputy Principal 2 Heads of Departments 3 Level1 teachers identified most as most influential teachers RCL president 2 Teacher focus groups 1 Student focus groups	Principal 1 D Principal 1 Level1 teacher identified as the influential teacher

Table 4: Breakdown of fieldwork activities at Umzamo

No. of Visits	No. of interviews	Shadowing
55 days	Principal 1 Deputy Principal 2 Heads of Departments 2 Level1 teachers identified as most influential influential RCL president 2 Teacher focus groups 1 Student focus groups	Principal 1 Deputy Principal 1 Level1 teacher identified as most the most teacher

Pre-access

Although not originally designed as part of data collection, the different manner in which the sample schools responded to access requests, as discussed above, provided initial data on the differences between the two schools' cultures and associated leadership. While the response of the Fundiseka principal had been thoughtful, sensitive to colleagues' feelings and consultative, that of the Umzamo principal had been immediate and non-consultative. Instead of being concerned with what the study might mean to his colleagues, the principal's only apparent concern was with its probable 'saviour' potential. Such a concern was, however, probably understandable in terms of the principal's history of displacement.

Culture 'identification'

Formal data collection began with observations at both schools. The observations continued throughout fieldwork, beginning at school level and moving on to incorporate class room level observations. Of main focus during the initial observations was getting the hang of 'how things were done' at the schools. This involved spending a week in sites where groups seemed to spend most of their time together. Also, of major concern at this stage was to get participants to go beyond allowing me to 'invade' their outer space, but to proceed to a stage where they would unconsciously allow 'invasion' of their inner space. This involved the establishment of a relationship aimed at 'persuading' the participants to be unconscious of my

presence so they would not be on guard over what they were saying to one another or how they were going about their business. One way this was established was by spending a week in each of the 'staff rooms'. The aim was to establish familiarity with all members in order not to exclude any individuals. Also, observations during tea breaks alternated between staff rooms and the schoolyard where students congregated or where some teachers spent most of the break periods outside staff rooms.

In addition to the above, various other strategies helped make my presence unthreatening. These included conveying interest in what everyone was doing and saying without appearing intrusive. It also meant using every available opportunity to eliminate ambiguity regarding this study by giving full explanations whenever individuals made enquiries. Furthermore, a point was made to move away from situations whenever individuals conveyed consciousness at being observed, for example, by cutting short their conversations or lowering their voices when I entered the staff rooms. The strategies seemed to work because by the time fieldwork ended the impression was that members at both schools were no longer self-conscious about being observed. Conversations and activities had assumed more relaxed tones than they had when fieldwork first began.

Initial classroom observations focused mainly on classroom cultures and did not involve any 'sampling'. The observations were not confined to patterns of behaviour prevailing during teaching but also focused on those that prevailed during the writing of tests and examinations. They also involved walking about to observe how classes behaved when teachers were not in class.

Leader identification

When it was felt that data gathered by means of observations formed an adequate working conception regarding the readily visible aspects of the schools' cultures, data gathering proceeded to identify perceived leaders at the schools. A questionnaire was administered for this purpose and was immediately analysed so the leadership could then be further studied through classroom observations and in-depth interviews. As fieldwork neared the end, the observations took the form of 'shadowing' for part of a day certain teachers identified as leaders. This form of data gathering helped access data that otherwise would have been lost to this study. For example, while the 'shadowing' had revealed a very approachable leadership at Fundiseka, it had revealed the opposite at Umzamo. Both the principal and the deputy I shadowed at Fundiseka were consistently approached and enthusiastically greeted by both staff and students. Contrary to this, even though staff would approach the Umzamo principal for one reason or another, the interaction displayed none of the warmth and banter displayed at Fundiseka. At no time was the principal seen to be engaged in informal conversation by students during the 'shadowing'. The opposite was however the case with the HoD that had been shadowed who, at that time, had conversed with both students and staff with ease.

In depth probes

As fieldwork neared its end, in depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals the schools' members had identified as influential people at their schools, as well as with teacher and student focus groups. This aspect was largely deductive. The aim was to develop a more in-depth understanding of the schools' cultures and associated leadership by probing values, beliefs and assumptions of the schools' members regarding the concepts. The interviews also helped access information that had not been readily accessible through observations, the questionnaire and documents, for example, values underpinning the schools' cultures and the degree to which the schools' populations shared understandings.

Each interview began in an open-ended manner. This involved requesting participants to describe what the two concepts of main concern in this study, namely, school 'culture' and 'leadership', meant to them. This was followed with a brief exposition

of meanings given to the concepts for this study. The purpose was to establish shared understanding between interviewer and interviewee on the concepts. Once this had been established the interviewees were then requested to describe their schools' culture and leadership. Such open ended-ness helped relax the interviewees. By getting interviewees to say whatever came first to their minds in relation to their schools' cultures and associated leadership, the interviewees were being afforded an opportunity to convey what was of major importance to them in relation to these concepts. More semi-structured questioning and probing succeeded the open-endedness. The probing helped elicit additional information and obtain clarifications on issues raised by respondents.

One problem experienced regarding this form of data gathering related to interview scheduling. Whilst it had been easy to schedule interviews with individual staff, this was problematic for interviews with both staff and student focus groups and with student leaders. Some staff members who initially had been selected to constitute staff focus groups were later excluded because class commitments meant that not all of the proposed teacher interview participants were available at the same time. Noise during breaks also meant interviews could not be conducted at this time. As a result, composition of the focus groups was ultimately determined by staff availability at the scheduled times of interviews. Similar problems were encountered with student focus groups resulting in interviews being conducted during the autumn break at Fundiseka and over test periods at Umzamo on students who were not writing tests at that time.

Lost data

Another interview-related problem was with regard to loss of data resulting from two heat-damaged audio tapes and loss of interview transcripts that occurred as a result of a computer virus. The above stated problems with interview scheduling discouraged any entertainment of re-interviews. Also, discouraging such a possibility was the prospect of appearing insensitive to other people's situations in an attempt to satisfy personal concerns. Furthermore, it was felt that re-interviews would not guarantee the spontaneity evident during the original interviews.

Data lost in this manner included interviews with the Umzamo staff focus group and two individuals identified as very influential at Fundiseka. The issue of the staff focus group interview posed less of a problem. To obtain the Umzamo teacher voice, another group of teachers was interviewed on the basis that in the previous interview the focus group had only consisted of teachers from only one of the school's staff rooms. The Fundiseka tapes posed a bigger challenge. All of the respondents had busy schedules and would have found a re-interview a serious inconvenience. To capture their voices, a decision was made to ensure that they were part of the 'findings' workshop. Notes that had been jotted after their original interviews also helped supplement the missing data. Posing less of a threat but stressful all the same was the delay caused by a virus that made some of transcribed material irretrievable, necessitating a retranscription.

Data analysis

Informing data analysis in this study were pointers by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 75) that good grounded theory is:

- inductively derived from data;
- subjected to theoretical elaboration; and
- judged adequate to its domain.

For the authors, such analysis begins:

> ... by focusing on an area of study and gathers data from a variety of sources , including interviews and field observations. Once gathered, the data are analyzed using coding and theoretical sampling procedures. When this is done, theories are generated, with the help of interpretive procedures, before being finally written up and presented.
> (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 75).

In line with the above, together with recommendations by authors such as Dick (2002), analysis commenced concurrent with data collection and proceeded throughout the process. Of main concern throughout was a desire to understand what was happening at the schools, why it was happening, how the players managed that which was happening, and how all of this was impacting on academic performance.

Paving the way was immediate *note taking* of key issues gathered either through observations, questionnaires, conversation or interviews. This helped ensure a 'true' picture of the schools' cultures and associated leadership. Also at the heart of the analysis were constant comparisons of issues not only between the two sample schools but also within each school. For example, the deputy principal who had been shadowed for a day had displayed different behaviours in each of the classes he taught on that day. A comparison of the behaviours revealed that the styles were contingent to class levels and that were therefore aimed at different purposes, as discussed in more detail in the discussion on leadership implications in Chapter 7.

Categories emerging from the comparisons were then *'open coded'* in the margins of the notes. Such coding consisted of:

- labeling or conceptualizing phenomena;
- naming emerging categories; and
- developing further categories in terms of properties and dimensions

The above helped precipitate theoretical sensitivity on gathered and unfolding data. Further assisting the process were techniques that consisted of:

- steering thinking out of the confines of technical literature and personal experience. The former posed a challenge because being a lecturer in education management meant a rather broad pre-exposure to related technical literature. Having been removed from school contexts for about fifteen years, the latter posed less of a challenge;
- stimulation of inductive process;
- focusing on presented data and shying away from taking certain issues for granted;
- allowances for clarifications and debunking of participants' assumptions;
- focusing on what people were saying and what they could be meaning;
- refraining from rushing past 'diamonds in the rough' when examining the data;

- asking questions and providing provisional answers or allowing provisional labeling;
- exploring possible meanings of concepts; and
- discovering properties and dimensions in data.

(Strauss and Corbin 1990: 76-7)

Basic questions asked throughout the analysis process were, as advised by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 77: *who? when? where? what? how? how much? and why?* The purpose was to open up the data and 'think of potential categories, their properties and dimensions' (op cit). This questioning helped direct to pertinent literature. For example, this had been the case when the analysis first started pointing at common understandings at Fundiseka. The succeeding questions were: Who and how many possess the understandings? How, where and when were the understandings generated? Who helped generate the understandings? Answers to these questions were then compared not only with the situation at Umzamo, but also with literature claims.

Open coding was followed by what Strauss and Corbin (1990: 96) refer to as *'axial coding'*. This involved putting the data back together in new ways that made connections between categories. This was done 'by utilising a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences' (op cit). The focus was on specifying categories in terms of the conditions that gave rise to them, the context (its specific set of properties) in which they were embedded; the action/interactional *strategies* by which they were handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of those strategies. The exercise gave rise to what Strauss and Corbin refer to as sub-categories (op cit). The subcategories were then linked to categories in a set of relationships denoting 'causal' conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences. The model utilised for this exercise was what the authors (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 99) labeled as 'The Paradigm Model', as depicted below:

(A) CAUSAL CONDITIONS → (B) PHENOMENON → (C) CONTEXT → (D) INTERVENING CONDITIONS → (E) ACTION/INTERACTION → (F) CONSEQUENCES

The presentations in the next four chapters of sample schools' cultures, and their associated forms of leadership, are made along lines that depict the above even though not in the exact order. The presentations however reflect all of the seven phases of the model.

The above coding facilitated the identification of *categories* (roughly themes) and *properties* (sub-categories or dimensions). The emergence of categories and properties and links between the categories further resulted in the identification of core categories which formed the basis for the formation of theoretical propositions leading to the generation of a theory on school culture features that have the capacity of supporting good academic performance in HDATSS and the generation of a related 'theory' (implications) on leadership associated with such cultures. Notes on the unfolding theories were then *memoed*. The memoing assisted with the integration of categories and took place in steps consisting of:

- the explication of the *story line;*
- *relating subsidiary categories* around the *core category* by means of a paradigm;
- *relating categories at the dimensional line;*
- *validating the relationships* against data; and
- *filling in categories* that needed further refinement and/or development.

(Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 117)

The above was followed by *'process'*. Process involved the linking of consequences of action/interaction as they pertained to the management of, control over, or response to, the schools' cultures. This was accomplished by noting:

- consequences that resulted from the action/interaction responses – for example the consequences of common understandings at Fundiseka, as presented in the next chapter - or the lack of common understandings at Umzamo, as presented in Chapter 5; and
- how the consequences became part of the conditions influencing the sequences

(Corbin and Strauss 1990: 143)

Theoretical sampling constituted the final 'stage' of the analysis. This involved the sampling of theories on the basis of concepts that displayed 'relevance to the evolving theory' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 177). The purpose was to sample events, incidents, and responses that were indicative of categories, their properties, and dimensions, so that they could be developed and conceptually related. The sampling also helped with the noting of '*variation* and *process*, as well as *density*' (op cit). The sampling continued until *theoretical saturation* was perceived as having been achieved. The saturation gave a signal that it was time to move on to *sorting* by sequencing properties in an order that was thought would make the theory clear.

In practice, the analysis process was not as linear as implied by the above description but occurred rather in 'back and forth' movements.

'Findings' workshop

Forming part of the analysis were 'findings' workshops conducted in each of the sample schools about two months after fieldwork had ended. The intention was to obtain feedback on the categories developed during analysis and to make the findings available to the schools in the belief that researchers owe participants such access, particularly for studies that are as intrusive as are ethnographies, as conveyed in the following quotation:

> The least that these people can expect by way of acknowledgement of this help is to be made aware of the nature of the ethnographic findings: it is a matter of courtesy that the ethnographer should, by some means, offer them access to the results. (http://www.poorbuthappy.com/ethnography/Handbook_Of_Ethnography?v=12i0)

CONCLUSION

Despite some limitations, as is the case with all methodologies, the methodology by means of which this study was conducted offered what other methodologies might not have been in a position to offer. Firstly, the power of the methodology in this study

lay in the capacity of ethnography to provide rich data that otherwise would not have been accessed had the study been conducted within alternate methodologies. Such richness was of critical importance for a study aimed at providing findings that feed into insights with respect to how good practice might be achieved.

Furthermore, the protracted data collection period over six months at Fundiseka and three months at Umzamo allowed constant analysis and provided opportunities for clarification on confusing issues. Implying this, among other things, were impressions of disorder conveyed by Fundiseka during the first week of data collection, as described in the next chapter, and that such an impression had changed as data collection proceeded and the 'true' picture of the school's culture was revealed. Opportunities for such 'revisioning' or filling in of gaps are denied by the majority of methodologies.

Also giving power to the conclusions drawn in this study was the incorporation of grounded theory in the methodology. The process did not only involve inductive reasoning but also included making deductions from patterns emerging from analysis. While the former freed the study process from restrictions posed by theoretical frameworks or hypotheses, the latter contributed to the achievement of 'generalisability' on school cultures that have potential to enable good academic performance to the majority of HDATSS (see Chapter 6) and draw implications on leadership that promises the formation of such school cultures (see Chapter 7).

CHAPTER 4

FUNDISEKA'S SCHOOL CULTURE AND ASSOCIATED LEADERSHIP: ENTHUSING NEGOTIATED COMMUNAL OWNERSHIP

The chapter describes findings on the school culture and associated leadership of Fundiseka Comprehensive High School, the sample school selected for its good academic performance, in five sections. The description begins with a brief historical background of the school then proceeds to a brief description of the most visible and most apparent cultural manifestations of the school's culture: the material, human and curriculum compositions. This is followed by a presentation on social manifestations of the culture, namely: the activities and interactions, together with underpinning values, beliefs and assumptions. The next section of the chapter then discusses strategies the school was found to be relying on for bringing about the desired behavioural norms. The last section presents the 'effects' that the school culture was found to have on the school community's feelings and activities related to academic performance.

FUNDISEKA'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Fundiseka is located in KwaMashu, an African township situated ± 20-30 Kilometers north of Durban. The township was established in 1959 following the Group Areas Act of 1950 on one hand, and on the other hand, concern by the Durban Municipality over growing numbers of African 'squatter' populations settling in Cato Manor, popularly known as Umkhumbane. This settlement was deemed to be illegal considering that at this time 'Africans were prohibited from owning land or building homes in an urban area, and were regarded as "temporary" sojourners' (http://www.cmda.org.za/history.htm). Most of the Africans living in the area were employed either as housemaids or gardeners to neighbouring residents of other races and were mostly tenants in land owned by the Indian population, with a few owning property after having purchased it 'illegally'. The majority of the people who first settled in KwaMashu were therefore mostly poor and illiterate or had received very elementary formal education.

Fundiseka itself was established in 1983 at a time when teaching and learning were at their lowest ebb in most of the country's African township schools as a result of generalized unrest of that time. KwaMashu was hit the worst by the unrest when compared to other townships around Durban. The profoundly debilitating effect of the unrest was reflected in the township schools' very poor matric performance (Nxumalo, 1993). Unlike the majority of secondary schools in the township, Fundiseka somehow succeeded to engage in teaching and learning activities that enabled it to produce matric results that exceeded a 70% pass rate in the 1980s while the majority of the township schools struggled to achieve a 40% pass rate, with quite a big proportion achieving less than 20%. Although the school's matriculation pass rates had, in the previous five years, been dropping to below 50% average (except in 2000 when the school achieved an 80 % pass rate) the school's performance was still comparatively better than the majority of Black schools in the area (see Appendix 10 – names of schools have been deleted with Fundiseka allocated the symbol 'F').

It was this above average academic performance, under conditions that were as trying as they were for other schools in the area, which persuaded the sampling of this school for this study. The hope was that the school's performance offered valuable lessons to other schools struggling with their academic performance. To achieve such lessons the school was, as indicated in the previous chapter, studied together with a school struggling with its academic performance. Also, as already indicated, the inclusion of the latter was for purposes of comparison and sensitization to issues that otherwise could have escaped capture. It is for these reasons that data collection at this school lasted for a shorter period, as also pointed out in the previous chapter.

Fundiseka's above average matriculation examination performance put the school in great demand not only for its intended catchment area but also for communities beyond the area. This resulted in overflowing enrolments despite overwhelmingly large numbers of rejected applicants. Illustrating the demand at the beginning of the 2003 school year was the substantial number of parents who accompanied their children daily for about two weeks and patiently stayed at the school for entire days at a time in the hope that their children would secure placements. Displaying the demand for the school was a response by one of the parents to a question on what his option would be if his efforts failed to secure placement for his son at the school. The

parent's response was that he just was not prepared to entertain such a possibility and that his intention was to keep on coming to the school until his son was accepted. The demand was so high that in this particular year the school was persuaded to convert its 'library' into a classroom to accommodate an additional Grade 8 class.

The demand for the school was particularly striking considering that a number of township schools had been losing prospective students to more historically advantaged White, Indian and Coloured schools, following the government's open enrolment policy in the late 1980s. Even though the 'Great Trek' to the historically more advantaged schools had not affected the school's enrolment figures, the school was said to have lost a sizeable chunk of prospective students belonging to the township's professional and business community. This was said to have left the school with a student population largely belonging to the more poverty stricken section of the township community. Despite the poverty, the school's 'clientele' dutifully paid the school fees, with less than 30% failing to pay the full R150.00 per annum amount.

FUNDISEKA'S MATERIAL, HUMAN AND CURRICULUM ATTRIBUTES

This section describes the most visible and most apparent cultural manifestations of the school's culture: the material, human and curriculum compositions.

Material resources

The school's material resources were such that they could not be deemed to be facilitative of effective teaching and learning. For example, in 2003 the school did not have a library as the room originally scheduled for the purpose had been converted. Also, even though prior to the conversion the room had been referred to as the library, the room had not been utilised as a library. This is because the 'library' hardly had media in stock nor did the school have a 'spare' teacher to man the library. All the bookshelves were empty with a few boxes on the floor filled with old departmental supply of textbooks. However, despite these disadvantages similarly experienced by

the majority of schools in the township, the school regularly produced above average matriculation results.

Despite the scarcity of educational resources, all classrooms at the school had a fairly adequate supply of fairly functional furniture. Students were, more often than not, comfortably seated for classes although this sometimes occurred after some running around in search of chairs from other classrooms. Furthermore, some of the chairs were clearly in need of repair/replacement. Although the two science 'laboratories' at the school possessed what could be termed basic laboratory structures, the laboratories were reported to be in dire need of chemical supplies. The school's home economics room had two stoves, both of which were in good working condition. It also consisted of a big, fairly new refrigerator. Also, teachers teaching in the technical section of the school were of the opinion that the section could benefit from additional or newer equipment (refer to the picture on pg 97 for an illustration on the status of the equipment). The shortages however did not seem to have a negative impact on the section's academic performance. All of the teachers in this section boasted matriculation pass rates in their subjects that ranged between 90% - 100%.

In addition, the school had six computers, one of which was new and had been purchased with money donated to the school by a United Kingdom school with which Fundiseka had a link. The non-African teacher at Fundiseka had initiated the link through the British Council. The money itself had been raised by students of the UK school link and was presented to Fundiseka by a teacher from the school who visited Fundiseka during the fieldwork of this study. This was said to be the second visit by a teacher from the UK school link. When the fieldwork ended the Fundiseka teacher who had initiated the link was preparing to visit the UK school link during the then forthcoming school holidays. There was also talk by this teacher of establishing a student exchange programme with the UK school in addition to the teacher exchange programme. The other five computers possessed by Fundiseka were fairly old and had been donated to the school by a higher education institution in town.

Grounds and buildings

The school consisted of 25 classrooms that were clustered into two main formations: one for academic classes and the other for technical classes and workshops (refer to pg. 106 for a picture of the buildings). The larger of the clusters, the academic section, consisted of six buildings. Four of the clusters housed classrooms. The remaining two were made up of the 'library' (converted into a classroom in 2003 to accommodate increased enrolments), two science laboratories and two home economics classrooms: one for lesson presentations and the other for practical work. Four of the buildings formed a rectangle around an open yard utilized for school activities such as morning assembly and other special events (refer to page 107 for a picture of a morning assembly at the school). Two more buildings were later constructed on the outer sides of the rectangle when the school extended its classes from the then Junior Certificate level to the matriculation level. The fifth building housed administrative offices consisting of the principal's office, three offices shared by the school's two deputy principals and four of its five Heads of Departments and a staff room. The smaller of the cluster housing classrooms and workshops utilised for technical lessons also consisted of an office for the technical section's Head of Department. It also consisted of a kitchen that stood unused up to 2002 but converted into an RCL office in 2003.

Adorning the school's grounds were two playing fields, one for netball and the other for soccer. The school's premises were clean and looked hygienic most of the time except on occasions when plumbing problems, which seemed to occur fairly often, caused overflows. Even though bins strategically placed around the school premises helped keep the school yard clean, classrooms were not in such luck. None of the classrooms boasted a rubbish bin. As a result, even though classrooms were swept daily, they were never quite clean, with rubbish dotting the floor, particularly behind doors.

Both the school's interior and exterior walls were adorned with graffiti. However, striking about the graffiti was its non-offensive tone. Graffiti on external walls usually referred to individuals or organizations held in high esteem by the students and was mostly in salutary forms such as 'Viva ... (names of various youth organization, etc.)' or referred to students' 'love' relations in phrases such as 'Zandi 4 Sizwe'. In addition

to references to student partnerships, graffiti on internal walls, particularly of Grade 12 classrooms, had messages that conveyed positive feelings for certain teachers such as 'We love you Mr/Miss/Mrs so and so). Except for the graffiti, most of the internal walls were bare. Very few of the classrooms had posters and those that did, had posters mainly on HIV-AIDS campaigns; classroom rules with only one or two displaying subject related content. What was also striking about the school's buildings was that, unlike the majority of schools in the township, almost all of the school windows were intact.

Curriculum

The Fundiseka curriculum consisted of a wide-ranging choice of streams and subjects and extra-mural activities. The formal curriculum consisted of academic and technical streams. Elective subjects for students specializing in the technical stream included technical drawing, electronics, electricity, and welding. Academic streams comprised of Natural, Management, and Human Sciences with a wide subject range that included IsiZulu, English, Biology, Physical Science, Computer Science, Mathematics, Business Economics, Travel and Tourism, Economics, Accounting, Home Economics, Geography and History. Such a range of subjects was unusual for a township school and constituted one of the things valued the most by the students about their school, as conveyed by following statement by one of the students that participated in the student focus group interview:

> *What I like most about this school is that it offers technical drawing.*

The school's extra-mural curriculum included activities such as debates; traditional song and dancing; gospel music; sport codes including netball, soccer, athletics, cricket, swimming, drum majorettes and table tennis. The school made use of township sporting facilities wherever its facilities fell short, for example for activities such as swimming and cricket.

'Picture' 1: Fundiseka Comprehensive High School

Picture 2: morning assembly at Fundiseka

Routine

The school's week was made up of nine days each of which was sub divided into three sections by two thirty minutes breaks, the first of which was at 10.00 with the last at 12.30. Each school day began in a short formal assembly at 07.45 comprising of hymn singing, a short prayer, a moral lesson or scripture reading or a reminder of school rules, particularly if there had been recent incidences where these had been broken, and special announcements. The school day ended at 14.30 from Mondays to Thursdays and at 13.30 on Fridays. Lessons began immediately after assembly and were an hour long. Students, not teachers as is the norm in most township schools, changed classrooms after each lesson. Observations indicated that the students found the practice invigorating. Implying this was animation on their faces as they chatted with peers while moving leisurely but determinately to their next classes. Also indicating the invigoration were the students' lively participations in class, as opposed to the situation at the sample school of poor academic performance where students sat in one classroom for about three hours with teachers moving in and out at change of periods.

Student attendance was regulated by daily roll calls at 13.00 – 13.15 while subject teacher attendance was regulated by period registers kept by class representatives, signed by each teacher at the end of each class and submitted at the end of the day to an HoD responsible for the task (see Appendix 10). Sweeping rosters regulated the cleaning of classrooms by students in turn at the end of each school day. A number of students would then remain behind after school for about an hour or so for study and/or completion of homework. As data gathering neared completion the school teaching community had started talks on setting up formally supervised, after-school study periods for the Grade 12 class.

Except for activities such as drum majorette and gospel music practice which took place every day during breaks, sporting activities were scheduled for Wednesday afternoons after the second break. Friday afternoons were scheduled for staff development sessions which were often utilized for staff meetings or updates by union representatives on developments related to employment conditions. Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings were scheduled for Thursdays between 12.00

and 13.00. This slot was only utilised if any of the team members assembled a meeting because they had an issue they felt needed to be discussed.

Student profile

The Fundiseka student body stood at 1,200 in 2003 with the female component slightly exceeding the male by a ratio of about 55:45% (680:520), with the students' ages ranging between 12 - 21 years. A large segment of the students were enrolled at the senior level (Grades 10 – 12), the bulk of which was in the Grade 10 class and taking up 7 of the school's 25 class sub-sections. Forming the second largest portion was the Grade 11 class which was divided into 6 sub-sections followed by the Grade 12 class which was sub- divided into 5. Even though the two lower grades had equal enrolments, insufficient classroom space saw the Grade 9 class subdivided into four fair-sized sections while the Grade 8 group was subdivided into three congested sections even after the conversion of the library into a classroom.

TABLE 5: FUNDISEKA'S CLASS SECTIONS/DIVISIONS

Grades	8	9	10	11	12
Sections	3	4	7	6	5

Even though the majority of students were from desperately poor families, a small number claimed that, although not exactly rich, their families could have afforded to send them to advantaged suburban schools but had opted for Fundiseka believing that the school was as good. These families believed that there was no point in spending more for what was available at their doorstep at a cheaper rate. The perception was shared by one of the deputy principals who himself had his children registered at the school. His insistence was that for him the school was as good as the majority of the more advantaged schools. The deputy further stated that he felt that it was his

responsibility to make sure that academic performance at the school improved so that all in the community could afford a good education.

Staff profile

Most of the school's staff was young, three quarters of whom were in their 30s and 20s with the oldest two in their early 50s, and the remainder in the 40s. All of the 50 teachers at the school were 'suitably' qualified possessing qualifications at or above the required NQF13 minimum teaching qualifications. A number of the teachers were at the time of data collection upgrading their qualifications. The teaching staff consisted of more females than males at a ratio of 27:23. However, only one of the school's five Heads of Departments was female. One striking feature of the staff was its low turnover. Although actual turnover figures were not obtained, conversations among staff gave the impression that the majority of staff had been at the school for a fairly long time. Most joined conversations about ex-staff members and incidents that had taken place at the school a relatively long time previously. The principal had, for example, been at the school since its inception in 1983, first as a 'Level 1' teacher then as a deputy principal until he got promoted to his present position. Also, all of the Deputy Principals and HoDs were promoted from within the school's teaching corps.

In addition to the teaching staff the school also had in its service two administrative officers, two security guards and two cleaners, all of whom showed signs that they enjoyed being part of the school with the school community according them the same respect given to the teaching staff. For example, although not part of the formal data collection scheduling, informal conversations with this staff conveyed a willingness to respond to enquiries relating to the study.

INTERACTIONS, ACTIONS, BELIEFS AND VALUES

This section begins with a brief description of the immediately observable aspects of the school culture and associated leadership that were found to be contributing

towards enabling Fundiseka's academic performance. The second part proceeds by providing information on issues that were found to be contributing to the formation of these enabling aspects. Ending the chapter is a discussion on what was found to be the effects of the culture on the school community's feelings and activities and therefore having a positive impact on the school's academic performances. The latter was considered even though this was not a 'cause an effect' study. However, it was felt that it was important to make an effort at reaching some explanation on what was potentially enabling about the school culture and leadership considering that actually enabling or disabling about the concepts are their impacts on member feelings (Law & Glover, 2001; Williams, 1989).

Table 4, below, provides an illustration of the school culture features and associated leadership together with the contributors towards the formation of the features and the effects that these had on school member feelings and activities, as described in more detail in the rest of the chapter.

Vibrancy

What was most striking about the Fundiseka school culture at first contact was its vigour. The vigour was so robust that the first impression of the school was that of pandemonium. This perception resulted from observing students moving around the school premises at times the school's schedule indicated that they were supposed to be in class. This impression changed as fieldwork proceeded and it became evident that what

TABLE 6: INTEGRATING AND EMPOWERING NEGOTIATED COMMUNAL OWNERSHIP AT FUNDISEKA

UNDERPINNING BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS

Vibrancy	Open friendliness

UNDERPINNING COMMON UNDERSTANDINGS

COMMON GOALS

Excellence	Holistic development

NORMATIVE BEHAVIOUR

Inclusivity/Diversity/Acceptance	Discipline and hard work	Rule following
Respect for issues: human dignity & property	Balancing individuality with communality	Problem solving
Shared responsibilities	Accessibility	Belonging
Security	Trust	Ownership

CONTRIBUTORS TO COMMON UNDERSTANDINGS

Ratified, dispersed, serving, vigilant, collective and diversified leadership	Negotiations/ collegiality

EFFECTS ON SCHOOL COMMUNITY FEELINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Integrated focus	Empowerment	Enthusiasm

had appeared to be chaos was because fieldwork had commenced during the last week of August at a time when the Grades 11 and 12s were preparing for trial examinations. The examinations were at that time due to begin in a week's time. The reason students were therefore not in class at this time was because lessons in the Grade 11 and 12 classes had stopped to provide students with time to prepare for the examinations. What was striking about the students' demeanor at this time was that it did not display levels of stress one would expect to see in students preparing for examinations. The students were so relaxed and lively that in between preparing for the examinations they found time to rehearse for a forthcoming trip to Ulundi for competitions on 'cultural' song and dance and for a forthcoming drum-majorette tournament.

However, the buzz continued even after the trial examinations had ended. It emanated from different sectors of the school almost all of the time. Breaks were alive with activities such as music, dance and drum majorette practices. There would be joyous and spontaneous running around all over the schoolyard at this time. Animated conversations and banter among teachers congregated in fluid groups inside and outside the staff-room, between students and teachers and among students would add to the buzz. Also characteristically vibrant were classroom participations in all of the observed lessons. Learner-centredness interspersed with robust and healthy banter between teachers and students and among students characterized all of the lessons. Providing examples (refer to field notes on Appendix 12 for an example of such learner-centredness) of the learner-centredness was the ease with which students asked and responded vigorously and with confidence to teacher posed questions. Also conveying learner centredness was a habit by all of the mathematics and science teachers whose lessons were observed to call on students to work out set problems on the board with the rest of the class commenting on the process with the teachers only joining in where classes would be committing errors in their comments.

The banter was enjoyed by all and showed no signs of detracting from lessons, despite stifling temperatures and/or crowded classrooms. The school's vibrancy was so striking that the first thing Mr. M., the only non-African educator at the school, commented on when requested to describe the school's culture during an interview with him was:

This school, they are a very vibrant culture (sic). I think in my experience, the behaviour of the children is tremendous. It is excellent. They are wanting to learn all the time. Teachers are willing to give up the education to the best of their abilities despite the constraints that we have in terms of resources, but teachers are willing - therefore the rest of the institution ... I think the culture of learning and teaching is at its peak with regards to the limitations in terms of resources.

The vibrancy was not only school bound but was also apparent in various special activities with other schools outside the school premises. A football 'bonanza' undertaken with neighbouring schools had both the school's teachers and students singing and cheering much more enthusiastically than most other schools participating in the event. What was also striking, and contributing to the school's vibrancy that at no time went 'out of bounds' during the event, was that whilst all Fundiseka teachers had accompanied students to the grounds, students from other schools appeared to be accompanied by very few teachers. In addition, students from the latter school showed little enjoyment over the event as they loitered around the stadium barely focusing on the events taking place in the ground.

Open friendliness

Linked to the vibrancy was a friendliness that permeated all interactions among different members of the school community. Both students and teachers chatted happily and shared jokes with each other. For example, the sight of teachers, male and female, chatting and walking about with arms placed comfortingly around students' shoulders was quite common. Although particular teachers had close groups of friends the groups were not exclusive. It was common to see members of one group joining conversations of other groups quite freely. This was so widespread that it was not always easy to tie certain individuals to any one group.

A 'belated' farewell party held in honour of the school's first principal who had been promoted to a position of superintendent education management (SEM) provided an example of the school community's enjoyment of one another and how at ease they all were with one another. Illustrating this, among other things, was the ease with which the teacher compering the function got away with making fun of the principal

and his colleagues in the presence of both staff and students inj a way that was enjoyed by all, including the 'victims'. One such a joke involved a story the compere related about an experience he had at the beginning of the year when he came across a group of Grade 8 students standing on the veranda at a time he felt they should have been in class. In response to his enquiry as to why this was not the case the group had informed him that the principal had instructed them to wait for him at that spot. Knowing that the principal was not at school on that day, the teacher instructed the group to stop playing truancy and go back to class. When the group insisted that it was telling the truth he suspected that this was a case of mistaken identity and requested the students to describe this principal for whom it was waiting. The teacher went on to say:

> *You know what? The students said nothing about 'umkhaba' (round belly) and said nothing about 'impandla' (receding hairline)! When the student started describing this person as a thin person with grey hair it dawned on me who 'this principal' was.*

At this stage everybody burst out laughing and turned the amused gaze that had 'accompanied' the storytelling away from the principal towards the teacher to whom it had then become apparent the students had been referring. Emerging from this was the fact that the community was so relaxed with one another that the teacher had publicly made fun of the principal's biggish belly and the other teacher's grey hair without fear of offending either of them. Both the 'victim' teacher and the principal appeared to enjoy the joke as much as everyone else did. One other important element of the school culture the joke had illustrated was the school's lack of preoccupation with hierarchical positions. The reason the mistaken identity had occurred was that the teacher assumed to be the principal, being the school's sports master, had made announcements at assembly more often than the principal had. Furthermore, the incident had occurred at the beginning of the year at a time when newcomers had not had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the teachers' identities. What this therefore meant was that the school community was so unconcerned with hierarchy that it had not, at the beginning of the year, bothered to introduce staff holding hierarchical positions of authority to newcomers.

The friendliness was also palpable in classes. Illustrating the friendliness and fondness for one another were responses to my questions by a Grade 8 class I had observed. Teaching the class on this occasion was the young male teacher who had been identified as one of the two most influential individuals at the school. When after the lesson I had asked the class to state its feelings for the teacher and give reasons for the feelings, the class's chorus was: 'asive simthanda' (we love him a lot). Reasons given for the feeling included:

> *Uyasithanda naye (he also loves us);*
> *Uchaza kahle konke akufundisayo (he explains his lessons well)*
> *Usichazela ngesiZulu uma singezwa kahle akushoyo ngesiNgisi (He explains in Zulu whenever we fail to comprehend a lesson in English)*
> *Unamahlaya (He jokes with us).*

Common understandings

Almost all of the actions and interactions observed among the school community members, together with responses by the members during informal chats and formal semi-structured, pointed at a culture underpinned by common understandings. Also pointing to common understandings was the link between the school's stated goals and normative behaviour (see Appendices13, 14 & 15) and member responses on valued goals together with observed member actions and interactions, as described below.

Valued goals

Two main issues that conveyed the school community's common understandings with regard to the school's goals were 'excellence' and 'holistic development'.

Academic excellence

At the centre of the school's goals was a determination by all of the school community to do the best it could in all of its endeavours and a determination to achieve all of its goals. At the centre of the understanding of excellence was academic excellence. This was so uncontested that one student's response to a question enquiring about what the school valued the most was:

Obviously it is education. Also, it is activities - but the most important thing we value the most is education.

Other responses illustrating the school's uncontested priority included:

Student 1: *What the school and the learners value the most is education. All the teachers and learners have one vision and that we are all here at this school to teach and to learn. The teachers are trying to make sure that the learners at the end of the day or at the end of the year come out having achieved what they wanted to achieve here at school. As you can see people study during week-ends and during holidays. Another thing that both students and teachers value the most are sports and making sure the school is clean and respectable to people. This is one of the schools that is respected here in kwaMashu and by other schools. (all 5 participants in the focus group nodded their heads in agreement to the statement)*
Student 2: *At Fundiseka our education always comes first and our students are well disciplined because our teachers treat us well and everything is going well ... and we are working to improve our results.*
Student 3: *Academically, I would say the Gr. 12s, before we even started school, we were called aside here at Tech and told that everybody must work hard and everything and drilled that this is a very important year of our lives and we must try to minimize things that aren't important.*

Informal conversations among teachers also provided opportunities for exposure to testimonies on the school's commonly held goal of academic excellence. Conversations, for example, among same subject teachers on various aspects of their subjects or among teachers teaching the same classes on how to handle students showing learning or disciplinary difficulties were a common occurrence. Also conveying the convergence was teacher concern over student understanding so much that the teachers often switched codes to explain new concepts and processes in Zulu. This was mostly seen to be the case in mathematics, natural science and technical classes. In addition, teachers often voluntarily gave extra lessons in the mornings before school, in the afternoon after school or on Saturdays. Also conveying the degree to which both the school's teachers and students valued academic achievement were responses by students such as:

If there is a subject you find unclear, they (teachers) want you to understand because if you fail, they are also unhappy. So you also need to work together. I think if they continue this way our school will improve and be tops.

Students further demonstrated their preoccupation with academic excellence by approaching teachers during breaks and after school in search of explanations on concepts not fully grasped in class. The concern was so profound that one of the students, assuming that I had the power, requested me to talk to one of a teacher who had refused students' requests to hold classes during the autumn break. The request by the student to me was even though explanations had been given about the nature of my presence at the school.

Also of note about the school's goal for excellence, was the school's concern not only with pass rates but more specifically with the quality and implications of the passes for students' futures. A comment made by the principal during an interview with him about the 63% pass rate achieved by the school in 2002 was that to him the rate was better than the 80% rate the school had achieved in 2000 illustrated the concern. For the principal, even though the 2000 pass rate had been much higher than the 2002 rate the latter was of better value because it consisted of more university exemptions. Feeding his view was that according to him a big number of the 2000 class was still aimlessly roaming the streets because their passes were failing to secure them jobs or acceptance into institutions of higher learning. The principal made a similar remark in the 'beginning of the year' staff meeting when he advised teachers not to stress over its 'lost' matriculation pass rate position to a couple of schools in the district. His encouragement to the staff was that it shouldn't be discouraged considering that the school had improved on its previous year's performance but instead to take pride, and persevere, on the quality of the performance when compared with the low rate of exemption passes of other schools in the district.

Holistic development

What was important for the Fundiseka community was not only academic excellence but also holistic development. Although all interviewees gave academic excellence as the school's priority, the interviewees also claimed that the school also encouraged and assisted students to develop all of their talents and celebrated excellence in non-

academic performances the same way it did for academic excellence. Further conveying this is that the school announced all achievements at morning assembly and similarly awarded all achievements at Prize-Giving Ceremonies. Further conveying the degree to which the school valued holistic development were trophies and awards achieved for various excellences that had equal place of pride in the principal's office.

The focus on developing not only the academic aspects in its student community had the less academically inclined feeling as much appreciated as the more gifted in this respect. Conveying the degree to which the students appreciated this were responses such as the following to a question on what students valued the most about their teachers:

> ***Student 1:*** *The teachers' ability to encourage other learners to do sport and cultural activities that they like. Our volleyball team has won a lot of awards and trophies. Also our drum majorettes win competitions. Last year they went to Cape Town and also the year before the last they were in Cape Town.*
> ***Student 2:*** *Another thing that I like that happens here at school is that the teachers are not only concerned about learning. They are also concerned about promoting sport because it's not education only you cal live with (sic), you can do sport and then you can meet people.*

Behavioural norms

In addition to holding common understandings on educational goals, the Fundiseka community also held common understandings on what constituted acceptable behaviour at the school.

Discipline, hard work and rule following

Both the school's teachers and students were undisputedly well disciplined, hard-working and rule following. What was striking about these was that they manifested themselves in a manner so relaxed and . As a result, although school was what may be labeled as an 'achieving' school its school culture differed from that described as a 'hothouse school culture' in Hargreaves' (1989). This is because although both had

high expectations of excellence, the Fundiseka school culture lacked the constant surveillance, control by covert coercion and emotional 'blackmail' characteristic of the 'hothouse school culture'. As a result, neither the Fundiseka teachers nor the students show edsigns of the heightened anxiety said to be characteristic of members in schools displaying the so-called 'hothouse' cultures.

The unregimented form of discipline, hard work and rule following at the school meant that the features were rather not readily noticeable to an initial cursory glance. The prevalence of late coming by a portion of students and staff had, for example, given an impression of ill discipline when the fieldwork first commenced. The perception changed as it became apparent that even though the latecomers often missed, or were late for, assembly almost all of them would be in class by the time the first lesson began. Also, observations of the students coming to school in the morning revealed that a number of them first had to accompany siblings to a nearby pre-school institution which began its day at the same time as the school. Further contributing to the late coming was that some students came to school by taxis, over which they had no control.

The same relaxed attitude was noticeable in the manner in which students moved from class to class between lessons. Although the relaxed manner had also initially given me the impression that the students were not disciplined, or not looking forward to their next classes, this perception changed as observations proceeded. As time went on it became apparent that the unhurried strolls were actually proceeding rather purposefully and determinedly towards the next classes. A possible explanation for the habit and its enabling potential could be contained in terms of Irvine's review of studies on 'racial' cultures which found that, contrary to western cultures who view time as a material space, African communities view time as social space (Irvine, 1990: 24).

What was also of note about student behaviour at the school is that it consisted of little truancy or other delinquent behaviour. This was contrary to student behaviours in neighbouring schools where, for example, fights among students were quite rampant. A student fight in one of the neighbouring schools during fieldwork had, for example, ended in death when one of the fighting boys stabbed the other. On the other

hand, only two incidents of minor fights came to notice at the study school throughout the six months of data collection. Also, hardly any students left school during the day without first obtaining the required permission. On one occasion that such a behaviour had come to notice it had been picked up by the class teacher during roll call and was dealt with in collaboration with the culprit/s' parents. This was contrary to the practice at the school of poor academic performance, as discussed in the next chapter, where a very large number of students played truancy throughout the day, a truancy that staff ignored and over which the principal pleaded ignorance during the findings' workshop.

Responses by all interviewees to the question on the school's values emphasised the degree to which the school community valued discipline, hard work and rule-following. Such responses consisted of statements such as:

> ***Student 1:*** *These teachers - they try by all means to make sure that the running of the school is straightforward, no one can come here and do their own thing and change the way the school is run. They make sure that the students are disciplined when they are told things they do it (sic)... Then we come to Mr N, Mr C and others, they are trying by all means to instill discipline in the school and that students get what they came to this school for. They make sure that students go home educated at the end of the day. We have period registers that teachers need to make sure are signed at the end of the period. If the teacher does not pitch up you go and find out why that teacher was not in class at that particular time. The teacher will have to explain because they need to make sure that students are attended to and taught at all times.*
> ***Student 2:*** *Here at school we do not leave the premises during break and we must always be in full uniform.*
> ***Student 3:*** *We work hard here. Students do their work. For instance in Gr. 11 they have extra lessons after school as do the Gr. 12s. We come in at 7am if we are doing a subject we don't understand, like maths ... After school it is study where we meet the teachers again and they help us again. Another thing is that the teachers are always there to give us advice especially in Gr. 12 where they help us to decide which paths to take and which ones we shouldn't.*
> ***Student 4:*** *Good behaviour. People on the outside call us 'Model Cs' (historically White schools) and that we are trying to be 'O Multi' (multiracial) and they say we are too proud. This is because we do not behave the way other pupils behave and*

because we have good education. The teachers here have the ability to mould us so that we can make something of ourselves outside in the community so we do not leave here and not do something with our lives and end up smoking dagga.

Also conveying student rule following at the school was the degree to which the students always wore the school uniform, as indicated in the following responses:

Female student: *The teachers want us to wear our uniform properly. We aren't allowed to have extensions in our hair, it (hair) should be tied back properly and we should not wear socks that you would wear with takkies. They like us to be clean.*
Male student: *About the uniform issue, here at FCHS we wear uniform, unlike other schools here at this township. The boys wear ties, and if it happens that you are not wearing one you may be sent home. Even with the girls the hair must be proper.*

Issue-based respect: human dignity and property

Also characterising interaction among the school community was a deep respect for issues such as human dignity and property. The respect was not only bottom-up but also flowed downward from teacher to student and from the principal to the teachers. As a result, reprimands did not only flow from teacher to student or SMT member to 'subordinates', but also from students to teachers whenever a teacher's behaviour was perceived as infringing on student personal dignity. Such objections would be quietly voiced and would often elicit an immediate acknowledgement or requests for pardons. Examples demonstrating such respect included the following:

Mr. P: *In my observation of the school, it is a professional nature. I haven't personally seen anything untoward. But it seems to be a very professional nature and they have got respect between teacher-pupil and pupil-teacher.*

Also conveying the school's value for respect was the following excerpt from the student focus group interview:

Student 1: *What I like most about leadership in this school is that the learners respect the RCL, they take it very seriously.*
Question.; *What does the RCL do to gain such respect?*

Answer: it is because they also show respect in the way they do things. It makes it easier for the learners to therefore respect them. You cannot respect someone who does not respect themself.
Student 2: Another thing that makes people respect the RCL is that it (the RCL) goes by the book. In other words, they make sure that the needs of the students are met. They also make sure that students get everything they need, for example, entertainment or if they have problems with teachers we try to solve them like last year's one. We sacrifice our studies sometimes when we have to go to places, like police stations, circuit offices. We try to make sure that everything that students need they get it at the time that they need it. By that we get respect and trust.

Also striking about the school community's respect was that it meant much more than respect for human dignity but extended to respect for property. Illustrating this was that the school's property, including windows and furniture, was not vandalized. This was contrary to what was noticed in a number of the other township schools. Further conveyed by the above responses about the school community's respect was that it was not only directed outward but was also directed inwardly to self, as conveyed by students' pride in their personal achievements and cleanliness.

Problem solving

Like the majority of organizations, the school had its own fair share of problems, as indicated by the following responses:

Student 1: The learners are not happy about teachers getting involved with learners and with boys smoking here. They are also not happy with boys smoking dagga here at school. They are not happy with teachers answering their cell-phones while they are teaching. They are not happy about this.
Student 2: There is nothing wrong with the school at the moment. But the situation of resources, I would like for us to have more resources, like computer rooms and everything. And another thing, as you can see we don't have a driveway. These are the types of things that we need to develop at school: resources, driveways, classrooms, so that we can have enough equipment to study with.

However, unlike some organizations, striking about the school's culture regarding problems the school sometimes experienced was a determination by the school

community to solve the problems. The school's response to a remark by one of the school's deputy principals (DP) at assembly in which he instructed students to report teachers who did not honour their classes and failed to give due notice provides one illustration of such determination. While the remark was aimed at solving an identified problem, it unfortunately served to create another problem, which, had it not been resolved, might have resulted in a rift between the deputy and a significant number of staff. Conversations among teachers indicated that most of them had found the remark offensive. Most felt that such a remark should not have been made at assembly but that the DP should have privately addressed the matter with the affected staff. A number of teachers, led by Mr N., the young male teacher identified as one of the most influential individual at the school, approached the DP in private over the matter. A special staff meeting was then convened in which the matter was discussed and which ended with an apology from the DP. Also striking about the incident is that it was made clear that the apology did not mean that the 'guilty' teachers about whom the remark had been made were 'off the hook'. All the apology meant was that the DP would search for another manner in which to deal with the matter.

The determination to solve problems was not confined to staff but filtered down to the student body. In illustration, responding to a question on procedures followed by students when dealing with discontent a student claimed that:

> *They (students) are free to report to RCL because that is what it is for. Then the RCL reports to the TLO (Teacher Liaison Officer) and then on to the principal so he can see how the problem can be solved. Lately, in the past years there has been a problem with teachers and corporal punishment which was no longer allowed in schools. Students were getting hurt especially those who were studying electricity. They were being hit with anything. We tried to solve it and even had a strike in 2002 where we did not go to classes for about a week trying to solve this problem. It was sort of solved because that teacher promised they would never do it again. And then last the very same thing happened. We tried to go by the book last year by not striking so we went to the circuit office to report this and then it was found that this thing travels slowly and learners were not happy resulting in another strike. It was solved in the end because that teacher was fired. What I am trying to say is that although there are things within the school that learners do not like, we try as the CL to solve them alongside other students who give us ideas as how o solve the problems.*

When asked why the students had objected to the beatings, considering that the practice was quite common at the school, the student's response was:

> *We have never not (sic) allowed teachers to hit us, because it is necessary sometimes. This particular one was using anything that he came across. He once hit a Gr. 8 pupil with a screw driver on the head and another with an electric cable until he had blisters on his hands. He was too abusive. He hardly ever hit anyone without bruising them or hurting them. Sometimes he would hit people for no apparent reason. We don't have a problem with the other teachers because they use a stick and not too excessively just enough to get students on the right track.*

Also illustrating the extent to which the school community was concerned with finding solutions to its problems was a response by one of the heads of departments (HoD) to a question on whether the school never experienced conflicts. The question had been prompted by the HoD's claim that social interactions at the school community were at all times cordial and professional.

> *There will definitely be conflicts. Eh, here in our institution, in our department, we call up the teacher, call up the pupil and try and resolve. Eh, that's the only solution. To call them both and resolve the conflict, or call them individually - find out what the problem is and go talk to both of them and try and resolve the conflict. There are other conflicts here, I think you are aware. It was a teacher and pupil relationship in terms of teacher, there was conflict. The teacher is suspended now. In this case, the teacher was called in and spoken to by the principal, by management, by the SGB. Once the principal could not reach consensus with regard to teacher, it was referred to higher authority.*

The school's orientation to problem solving was not only confined to issues related to social relations but also extended to all issues perceived as obstructing the school's teaching and learning. Responding to a question on whether he thought the school's culture enabled learning, the school's Representative Council of Learners (RCL) president claim was:

> *Yes, it is easy to learn here. The problem is with the classes that are difficult to control because we have small classes (classrooms). We are looking for funds so we*

can build more classes. For instance we have a new class for Gr. 8s and somebody from the UK has come (sic) and funded the school and given us about R15 000.00'.

Equity

What the study also found to constitute an important enabler at Fundiseka was the school's concern and sensitivity to equity issues. The school not only enabled female leadership to emerge but also went out of its way to develop it. Illustrating this was the manner in which the school's only female HoD was given leadership opportunities equal to those given to her male counterparts. This had put her in a good position to initiate and chair a number of SMT meetings whenever she identified the need. Further demonstrating her leadership and the school's enabling nature for her to exercise her potential was the number of activities she coordinated, including the school's initiation to the OBE programme, netball and drum majorettes.

Further demonstration of the extent to which the school raised awareness to equity issues was a remark by the school's teacher liaison officer during an RCL election workshop. The remark had been made after a female student had declined nomination into one of the positions in the RCL. Firstly, the teacher had encouraged the student to accept the nomination pointing out that the experience would be good for her in many ways. The teacher then went on to praise the student who had nominated the female student stating that it was important to have women in leadership positions because their voices also needed to be heard. Also pointing to the school's concern over equity issues were interview responses such as:

> ***Student1:*** *Yes, we do try to do that a lot especially in the RCL. In the committees there are female learners that are in high positions. But since I have been here, I am not sure if there has ever been a female (RCL) president.*
> ***Student2:*** *There is no discrimination in the classroom in terms of how teachers treat girls as opposed to boys. In all the classes that I have been in, the teachers treat us all the same. There are no instances where boys are favoured more or vice versa. All the teachers I know treat all boys and girls the same. If a girl does something wrong, she will get the same punishment that a boy would get, but at the same time it is limited, the punishment is determined by what you have done wrong*

Student3: Most of the time we will have a president and only the vice president will be female. I would like to see a female president one year because you find that all the time it is a male that is president of the RCL.

In response to a question on what the students felt could be done to change the above status quo, the student stated:

I think there is something that can be done by me and those that are in the committee (RCL) with me because we do try to fight for female rights. We try to fight for students' rights as a whole that they must be treated the same. Males and females should be treated as having equal brains.

Individuality, inclusion and diversity

Also forming an important part of the school's culture was inclusion and diversity. This became apparent on the very first week of fieldwork as a group of female students was observed reading a paper while conversing excitedly with a male student. I later learned that the paper the students had been reading had carried a picture and story of a 'gay' beauty contest over the weekend in which the male student had been awarded first prize. The group of students had therefore been congratulating him over the achievement. A similar excitement and congratulatory cheer from teachers who had read the paper greeted the student later in the day as he entered the staff room on another mission.

Another incident that illustrated the school community's inclusivity took place during an intra-school 'Soccer Bonanza' at the beginning of the year. At this event a crippled ex-student who, because of his crippled upper limbs, was not able to further his studies or get employment, refereed the event. The school made use of his refereeing talent whenever it participated in 'big' matches and remunerated him for his services. That the student had completed his matriculation was because the school had helped him 'write' his examinations and tests by arranging for him to record his responses onto an audiotape. Interview responses confirming the school's inclusivity included the following by one of the students that participated in the focus group:

And what else can I say - is that it is a school where you can do anything you feel like, which of course is positive, not negative. For example, you are free to express your culture, you are free to speak any language that you like, you are free to put your views in front (sic), to say you like this and you don't like this

Further illustrating the diversity was the following simple response by the only non African teacher at the school to my question on whether the school tolerated diversity and inclusivity:

Yes, it is. I am here!

Belonging

What the school offered its community attracted its new members so much to it that a common characteristic among the newcomers was a desire to belong so strong that the members showed preparedness to go that extra mile in order to gain acceptance. Demonstrating such a desire, among other things, was the community's rule-following behaviour, as illustrated by low rates of truancy, absenteeism, smoking, drinking or fighting. Also demonstrating the sense of belonging was the extent to which students took pride in their school uniform to ensure that they could be identified with the school by all who saw them outside the school premises, as was apparent in the phrase from a response by a student that '... I like it when we wear our blazers ...'. Both students and teachers also dutifully undertook tasks that would lead towards the achievement of good grades and the related acceptance and belonging. For example, both students and staff attended classes as required. In addition, teachers attended workshops and consulted one another in an effort to improve their lessons and student performance in examinations. Furthermore, classroom observations revealed that most students did their homework dutifully most of the time. Adding to issues that conveyed the desire to belong were responses by students participating in the student focus group to a question on what students valued the most about the school, including the following:

Student 1: *Positive image. The first reason why I came here was because some of my family members are past students here and I used to hear good things about the school.*

Student 2: *Everyone here in KwaMashu talks about this school as a respectable school and as one that produces good results*
Student 3: *I like it when we wear our blazers*
Student 4: *First of all, I could describe Fundiseka as a different school. For the reason that this is a school that is more focused. Fundiseka is different from other schools here in KwaMashu – the way we live (sic) within the school is different. They (learners in other schools) envy the learners within the school – that they come to learn, they came here to plan our future and the relationship between the learners and the teachers is good*

The promise of acceptability among peers and the desire to belong was not only confined to students but equally characterised feelings of new staff. A conversation with a teacher who had approached me to enquire about the study during the early stages of data gathering conveyed a very strong desire by the teacher to be a 'confirmed' part of the school. The teacher had joined the school less than a year previously after having been redeployed from her previous school as a result of its reduced enrolment. She stated that she liked being part of the school so much that she didn't mind the added distance she had to travel to and from school everyday. Her reason for this was that: 'Kuyafundiseka la kanti lapha kwakungafundwa ngiyakutshela' (it is possible to teach here. No learning took place at that school, I am telling you).

This teacher's feelings were shared with a newly qualified male teacher volunteering his services at the school at the beginning of 2003 while waiting for a vacancy. The teacher had chosen to volunteer his service at the school with the hope that he would obtain a permanent position at the school. Being an ex student of the school and also having done his practice teaching for his Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at the school,the teacher was quite familiar with the school's culture. For him the school's culture was such that he would do anything to be part of the school. He liked the school so much that he had readily acceded to my request that he describe in writing the school's culture, as gained from his various involvements with the school (see appendix 5).

Ownership

Observations and interviews with different members of the school conveyed a very strong sense of ownership that was not apparent at the school of poor academic performance. School members referred to the school as 'our school'; to students as 'our students; to the teachers as 'our teachers'; and to the principal as 'our principal'. This saw the school community doing all it could to maintain its school's reputation by working hard to achieve the school's desired academic goals. The ownership extended to keeping watch over the appearance of the school, as demonstrated, for example, by a group of students who had approached the deputy principal to report a student who had broken their classroom window.

Bringing about the sense of ownership, among other things, was that all participated in decision-making and therefore in shaping the culture of the school. Linked to this was that because the school leadership had emerged organically, this meant that it had been ratified by the school community and therefore 'belonged' to it.

Individuality/independence

One disadvantage of communalism is that its sense of oneness or belonging transgresses individuality as demanded by modernity's striving for self-actualisation (Bauman, 2001). However, striking about the Fundiseka school community in relation to this was that although predominantly driven by a wish to belong, as is the case with traditional communities, unlike traditional communities the school's community also displayed a strong sense of individuality and independence. Conveying this was, among other things, the school's relaxed dress code for teachers. This led to a section of the younger female staff turning up in very fashionable clothing. The styles were strikingly acceptable to the more conservative segment of staff who, on enquiry, had claimed that the diverse dress code was actually good for the school because it had students identifying with the young teachers and aspiring to be like them. As a result, the school made use of this section of staff for organising activities such as beauty contests and fashion shows for fund-raising purposes. One of the responses that pointed to the individuality was:

> *... and what else can I say about the school where you can do anything you feel like doing, which of course is positive not negative. For example, you are free to express*

your culture, you are free to speak any language you like, you are free to put your vies in front – to say you likethis and you don't like this. I think that is all.

Well-being

Also resulting from the school's culture was a sense of well being. Conveying the well-being was, among other things, the school culture vibrancy. Also conveying the well- being were interview responses such as:

> ***Student 1:*** *They have created a few organizations at school. If a learner has any sort of problem or any kind of other development, if for example, a learner does not understand something in the school they take him and help him (sic) the best way they can. And counseling: if a learner has a certain problem like emotions, like myself as a leader, I have high emotions. If for some reason I don't feel alright or if I get angry I usually feel like I could heat someone, well I have gone through counseling and they have developed me, now I have seen some changes.*
> ***Student 2:*** *'What I think is another thing that makes the school good is that the teachers give the learners time if they (learners) have problems at home. All you need is to explain and they will advise you in the way they feel fit.*

Trust

The transparent and participatory manner in which the school community conducted its business brought about a trust that made it possible for the members to try out new things and engage with one another in all their endeavours. A unanimous comment by the staff focus group that participated in the 'findings workshop' illustrated a trust that the community had, not just of one another, but also of people in positions higher than theirs. The comment was in response to an enquiry on a finding that not all decisions were taken in a participatory manner at the school. The group's response was that even though the principal sometimes took decision on his own, this did not bother the teachers because the principal always presented the decisions to them and would also entertain dissent and inputs when teachers voiced disagreements with the decisions.. Also pointing to the trust were comments such as:

> *The teachers here are always honest in their marking. If you fail you fail.*

The following section discusses issues that were found to be contributing to the nature of school culture at Fundiseka, particularly to the common understandings aspects. The aspects fell into three main categories, namely: leadership, rituals, ownership and negotiations.

Leadership

Even though all of these three features were found to be main shapers of school culture at Fundiseka, embracing all of the features was leadership. Embracing about the leadership and therefore particularly enabling about it for the formation of a potentially supportive culture at the school about the leadership was *diffusion* and *contingency*, as discussed hereunder. One issue that served to convey this aspect was the following response to a question on who enculturated newcomers at the school or took leadership in shaping the school's culture:

> ***Student:*** *They (teachers) also let them (new students) know about the punishments. I remember when I arrived they told me what the punishments were and that they weren't afraid to hit you. So when they hit you can't complain because you knew from Day 1.*

Although the response pointed to corporal punishment, an illegal and controversial aspect of Fundiseka school culture, the response served as a strong illustrator of the school leadership's role in shaping the school's culture.

Diffusion

A reason found to be contributing to the capacity of the Fundiseka leadership to shape common understandings among the school's community was that the leadership was diffused and therefore accessible to the whole of the community. Particularly striking about the dispersion and probably contributing to its enabling capacity was the lack of resentment and suspicion on the leadership by individuals holding formal positions of authority at the school. Probably contributing to this was that the bureaucrats were themselves perceived as being of influence by individuals under their domain of

responsibilities. This finding was in line with recent findings that characterizing effective organizations, amongst others, is dispersed leadership and flatter organizational structures (see, for example, Bennett, 1991; Coleman, 1994; Gold, et al., 2000 and Gold, 2003). What was found to be enabling the diffusion at the school was the leadership size, capacity, focus and shared responsibilities.

Leadership size

Pointing to the diffusion were a number of responses, including the following, to a question enquiring about the identities and numbers of individuals that influenced others' attitudes and activities at the school:

> ***Student 1:*** *I think it is a big number of people because it includes both learners and teachers. For example learners that are in the RCL and others that are in other committees in the school and teachers have good influence over the learners in their behaviour and their learning habits (all 5 respondents in the learner focus group agreed)*
>
> ***Student 2:*** *These teachers they all try by all means to make sure that the running of the school is straightforward, no one can come here and do their own thing and change the way the school is run. They make sure that the students are disciplined when they are told to things they do it (sic). For example, - Mr N, Mr C and others, they are trying by all means to instill discipline in the school and that students get what they came to this school for. They make sure that students go home educated at the end of the day. We have period registers that teachers need to make sure are signed at the end of the period. If the teacher does not pitch up on this and find out why that teacher was not in class at that particular time. The teacher will have to explain because they need to make sure that students are attended to and taught at all times.*
>
> ***Teacher:*** *Culture in this school is actually shaped by the majority of people. The majority are (sic) seeking a common goal and I think the majority are shaping the culture -.cultural excellence – wanting to do better. The majority of the people in the school want to do it, but as I said you will get, I don't even know them, you will get the minority that will pick and point fingers, whatever. But the majority of people want the best.*

Contributing to the leadership size was that the school community did not view leadership as a preserve of a few individuals occupying official positions of authority at the school. Instead, the community allowed and enabled leadership to emerge organically and informally from all of the school's sectors. The school's practice of enabling leadership to emerge from the ground meant that the school had the number and type of leadership needed by its community. As a result, the leadership reached and was available to all of the school's community. One such emergence revealed itself on the very first day of fieldwork at the school when a group of students was observed rehearsing its drum majorettes' steps while awaiting the teacher coordinator who was delayed elsewhere. One of the students called out to the drummers and coaxed them to begin their paces and was able to get an immediate and intended response from the group. The student did not hold a formal position in the group but was able to command influence because, as informed by a nearby student on enquiry, she happened to be a good drummer and was generally perceived as a very responsible individual. That the student was part of the elected RCL the following year gave the impression that she had demonstrated her leadership capacity on numerous occasions.

Leadership capacity

Also contributing to the enabling capacity of the leadership diffusion was its 'leadership capacity'. Helping bring this about were the school's multiple committees such as the RCL and its various subcommittees such as peer counselors; student education committee; sports committee and disciplinary committee. Contributing to the capacity of the committees is that they provided emergent leaders not only with ample opportunities to exercise leadership but also with opportunities to further develop their leadership potential under the guidance of staff leadership, as pointed out in interview responses such as:

> ***RCL member 1:*** *Sometimes we attend workshops and people come in to motivate us and tell us what to do, and how, in life.*
> ***RCL member 2:*** *there are other committees that have student leaders. There is the matriculation committee, there is the committee for the English Academy and so on. The teachers help them in improving their leadership skills. Although there usually*

isn't much that goes on, they may put you in contact with people on the outside, but generally they do their best to help out.

Shared responsibilities

Enabling about the leadership diffusion was not only the leadership size and skill but also its capacity to be different things to different people at different times. Making this possible were shared 'responsibilities' among the leaders, shared in the sense that the leadership, both formally and informally, offered the school community different aspects of leadership. For example, while certain sections of the leadership leaned more towards transformational and relationship orientation and/or nurturing forms of leadership, other sectors of the leadership were decidedly task-oriented. The principal's leadership was, for example, so decidedly relationship oriented that the staff was very relaxed with him to the extent that the young addressed and referred to him in his clan praise name, in compliance with the Zulu custom of addressing respected elderly members of the clan. Also illustrating the shared responsibility orientation and the value attached to it by the school community was the following response by one of the teachers participating in the teacher focus group:

> *What I see with ... (praise name) is that we take him as a father figure. So whenever there is a problem we are able to sit with him and talk to him. So even when we are looking for jobs (promotional posts) he wants to know what is going on (progress).*

On the other hand, descriptions of the deputy principal identified as the second most influential person at the school by both staff and students labeled the DP as a decidedly task-oriented individual. Striking about this was that the orientation was equally valued by all of the school community. This is even though staff objection to an announcement by the DP during a particular morning assembly that students should report teachers who failed to honour their periods had initially given the impression that the staff was averse to the orientation. Subsequent events had however dispelled the suspicion. In fact, interview responses indicated that a small section of the teaching staff was of the opinion that the principal tended to be too lenient. For these members of staff a little bit of more of the DP's task oriented leadership could have lifted the school academic performance from its above average rating to that of excellence. Also indicating the acceptability of the orientation at the

school was the deputy principal's identification as the second most influential individual at the school by both teachers and students. A student's response confirming this was that what he liked about the DP was a disciplinarian that 'makes sure that students go home educated at the end of the day'. When asked how he achieved this, the student's response was that he did this by making sure that teachers attended their periods by checking the time table and taking rounds around the school to make sure each class was attended by a teacher and also by checking that period registers were dutifully issued to teachers by class representatives.

Role modeling

To promote desired forms of behaviour from the school community, the school leadership modeled desired behaviour as contained in documents such as the 'Code of conduct' (see appendix 13), 'school's rules' (see appendix 14), the school's development plan and mission statement (see appendix 15) and code of conduct (see appendix 16). That role modeling took place and succeeded to influence the attitudes and activities of the school community was discernible in a number of responses to a question enquiring about what the school utilized to initiate its newcomers:

> ***Student:*** *Students observe and imitate, for example the dress code, rule-following and work ethic. These are all rules, So if someone comes to the school they notice things like that and education and when we study we are serious.*
> ***Teacher:*** *work is carrying on all the time. When you see a new comer and you see that work is going on (laughs), the principal introduces the teacher to the staff and to the HOD, then the HOD takes it from there, introduces them to the staff etc. and they can see that work is carrying on so he just follows the work schedule and he carries on (laughs)*
> ***Student:*** *It is done especially by teachers because we are only students and the people who arrive know nothing about the school. The teachers try to address them and tell them how thing are done at this school. For example, we know that it is usually students that come from different schools and in this school what students value the most is our school uniform in its entirety. They try to address them about that and how to behave in class. The initiation that old students provide, the name calling is usually jokes but sometimes the newcomers do not take it well. It also happened to me and it didn't feel nice. At the end of the day the teachers try to address newcomers in the proper manner by telling them the rules of the school.*

Student: He (the principal) plays a big role in motivating the learners. He is always open. When I first got to this school I thought that I might have problems approaching him for assistance, but I find that every time I go to him I get the assistance I need. He is helpful, friendly and he always motivates the learners and the teachers. Because for the teachers to do what they do with us they go past him as well. He makes sure that before they can expect discipline themselves, they don't just do as they please. That is what the principal does for the school and he also looks out for the well-being of the school that it is always alright.

Vigilance

Closely linked to role modeling was the vigilance with which various leaders at the school guarded against and discouraged behaviour deviating from acceptable behaviour. Responding to a question on how the school achieved its good academic performance, one of the teachers identified as one of the three most influential individuals at the school, for example, claimed that among other things, all teachers honoured their classes. When asked how the school accomplished this taking into consideration that a majority of schools in the township seemed to be struggling with the issue, the teacher claimed that whenever it was suspected that particular teachers were not doing their bit, staff would make pointed remarks aimed at correcting the transgression. For example, influential teachers would stand up each time a change of period bell rang and enquire from all who remained seated whether this was because they had a 'free' period like him/her. The teacher claimed that whoever would be asking the question would be standing in the vicinity of the time table and gazing at it. This would continue until all were satisfied that the message had achieved its desired effect. According to the teacher was that if this failed to drive the point home, the 'guilty' parties would then be directly 'reminded' of their responsibilities.

Caring

Also particularly striking about Fundiseka leadership was its concern for the school community's well being. Pointing to this was that all interviewees' descriptions of all of the individuals identified as influential included a *caring* aspect. This was the case, for example, with the description of Mrs Z., the lady teacher identified as the most influential female teacher at the school. Contributing to her influential capacity, for example, was that she played a very active role in the school's HIV-AIDS awareness

campaign and also went out of her way to help individuals living one way or the other with the pandemic. Her activities further involved coordinating the school's peer counselling team and providing assistance to students in dire economic need. Her influence was such that a number of student leaders she worked with had voluntarily undergone HIV testing and wore pins proclaiming their negative status with pride. The purpose was to motivate other students to refrain from risky practices. Below are some of the responses that conveyed the degree to which a caring attitude was valued by the school community and therefore carried leadership capacity for the community:

> ***Student 1:*** *For example, Mrs Z. looks after the well-being of the students. You find that some students are being abused a home and you find that they are too scared to say anything to anyone. She tries to find these people and help them. She is not alone on this. There are some other students she works with. Recently a student had a problem at home. It was painful. Apparently everyone at home was sick and she was the only one who does everything. Her mom and sister are mentally ill. Mr C. & Mrs Z and other teachers also try to help those students who get abused at home or people who re really poor.*
> ***Student 2:*** *They also don't want students staying at home not doing anything. They organize bursaries for us.*

Fairness

Fairness was one other characteristic found to be enabling about the school's leadership. Indicating the degree to which the school community valued this 'leadership' aspect were a number of interview responses, including the following by two students participating in the student focus group:

> ***Student 1:*** *Another thing I like about leadership in this school besides the RCL is that we use the same system that the rest of the country uses to vote. We use democracy and that is why things work, because people who are leaders are people who everyone has agreed on. This is what I like. We work democratically.*
> ***Student 2:*** *It is very straight because everybody is always told that he or she must be responsible for the position that he or she has and handle it with great honour. The school must take the person as a member of the office and they must be exposed to what does gender means, equality in the school (sic).*

Nurturing

Emerging from responses to a question on what interviewees liked the most about the school leadership was that, amongst these, was the nurturing provided by the leadership, as illustrated in the following response:

> *They (teachers perceived as leaders) behave very well and when they give out advice they sit down and all your problems... They get different views from all the learners in the class and they put that together and come up with a solution listen to*

Also pointing to the degree to which nurturing was valued by the school community and therefore contributed to influence capacity was that the student body had taken to referring to the lady teacher referred to in the above discussion as 'u-Ma wethu' (our Mother). This was with reference to her being available not only to students in need of caring but also to those in need of nurturing, as claimed not only by the above responses but by all interviewees.

Negotiated consensus

When asked how decisions were taken at the school, respondents claimed that in most cases this involved negotiations that would continue until consensus had been reached. The first hint at the school's consensual decision revealed itself when access for the study was being sought and as permission came to be granted only after the principal had satisfied himself that everybody understood what the study was all about and also had no objection to it. Furthermore, all of the meetings that were attended during fieldwork at the school also confirmed the consensus claim. Although only about 50% of staff was observed to be habitually participating in discussions during the staff meetings, interview responses indicated that the 50% represented the opinions of the silent half in that although mostly silent, this half voiced their opinions whenever it felt strongly against decisions being taken. Also demonstrating the consensus was the manner in which the SMT meetings were structured to allow a large number of the members to participate either by leading discussion on various sections of the agenda or reporting on special tasks that had been delegated to them. Responses alluding to consensus included:

Student 1: *All the decisions that are made in this school have to go via the teachers, the principal and the RCL. Obviously once they reach the RCL, the RCL members go back to the learners and invite them when something in the school needs to be done and ask them how they feel about it. If the learners have problems they will speak up and if they agree then those things will be done. There haven't really been changes that have been made that the learners have not been in agreement with. Most of the time when these decisions are made the learners already know about them and they know that they will benefit them.*

Student 2: They (learners) consult the RCL. As we are preparing the Code of Conduct we asked the learners to write down the things they do not like in this school; in the culture and everything'

RCL president: *I can say it is a joint venture. The SGB, principal and other teachers, they discuss whether they are making the right decision. All the heads of the school do this together*

In confirmation of the above, one of the HoDs pointed out that although decisions were reached primarily through consensus, at times the decisions were taken hierarchically or merely involved some consultation depending on circumstances such as urgency. The HoD claimed that the school community trusted the school's bureaucracy sufficiently not to be bothered by theoccasional unilateral decisions. His claim was that:

Decisions are taken with consensus with regard to management. We are informed of certain decisions that need to be taken. There is certain consensus that is reached on certain decisions. Sometimes it is not really possible to get consensus on all decisions. Some decisions have to be taken on the spur of the moment. The principal or the person who is in charge takes the decisions. But the decisions that need to be taken via consensus is (sic) done via consensus.

Rituals and ceremonies

In addition to leadership, the school also relied on various rituals and ceremonies for promoting common understandings on the school's goals and desired behaviour. Below is a discussion of some of the rituals and ceremonies.

Morning assembly

One of the rituals the school relied on for the enculturation purposes was 'morning assembly'. Activities utilized by the teachers for this purpose during morning assembly included the reading on numerous occasions of the school's rules. On the occasions the teachers would also stress to the students on what the school would not tolerate and what the consequences would be for anyone ignoring the rules. One such occasion was with regard to students that had been observed smoking behind a certain classroom during break. This had the students reminded at assembly that the section behind that class was out of bounds for students and that anybody seen in that area would 'bear the consequences'. The school also used morning assembly to inculcate excellence by celebrating through the announcement of the names of both staff and students who had excelled in areas such as sport or had been elected to 'prestigious' positions such as that of belonging to the RCL. Also conveying the degree to which the school relied on morning assembly for enculturation purposes were responses such as:

> ***Teacher:*** *To reinforce discipline. Assembly is very important. Late coming is not tolerated, school uniform is checked. You see the concept of discipline is inculcated and we are checking all that. I mean the management checks that very vigorously. I think that all adds to that we have such a good discipline situation in our school because of all these things. We don't tolerate late coming, we don't tolerate students without uniform, we have our assemblies every morning and all students are there, students are dressed, a little bit of religion is put into assembly to teach them some moral values. Plus we have lots of activities in term of culture.*
> ***Student:*** *In assembly we are motivated about what to do and what not to do. Especially about AIDS. It is not only people from outside like priests and teachers that only do this, you find even students doing it as well*
> ***LRC President:*** *Yes, it (assembly) really helps with culture because every year when schools reopen the president has to make a speech about school reopening. Like today I was making a speech that everyone should go well to the holidays and take care of themselves and behave and those who did not do well there is still another chance to do better in coming days.*

Prize giving ceremonies

Also providing the school with a vehicle for conveying its common understandings were prize-giving ceremonies. The ceremonies enabled the school to spread its excellence gospel by providing a platform on which the school could showcase achievements by various members, including ex-members, of the school. Interviewees claimed that one way in which the school utilised the ceremonies for the purpose was by inviting ex-students who were doing well in their fields as guests of honour to provide motivational speeches at the ceremonies. That the events served their purpose was conveyed by various interviewee responses, including the following by a student:

> *Prize-giving Day pays homage to those who have performed well academically and with cultural activities that they have participated in. This helps them (students) to have the strength to carry on and do well in their futures.*

Initiation name-calling

Name-calling was one other ritual that provided the school with strategies for initiating new students into the school's culture. Although this form was not exactly enjoyable to newcomers it did help bring about desired actions by prompting the newcomers to conform to the school's way of doing things in an effort to escape the name-calling. The following responses hinted at the practice's effects on newcomers:

> ***Student 1:*** *But there is sometimes discrimination, you find that pupils in higher classes treat students in Gr. 8 as if they are children, they don't respect them cause they have just arrived here at school and they know nothing. This is what I have noticed. Even teachers do this. For example the way they speak to these students shows that they don't respect them, they speak anyhow and call them names, e.g. Mafikizolo (literally meaning those that arrived yesterday/Newcomers)!*
> ***Student 2:*** *They also call them goalkeepers, strange names. But new comers have a tendency to be naughty; they don't want to respect those that have been here longer. They want it to seem as though they have been here for a while so they can get used to things. But they should be looking at how those that have been here for a while do things.*

Student 3: It used to upset me, but then I realized that I was new and had to look to others how things were done. I do the same to those who came after me, but I tell them that the same happened to me.

'EFFECTS' ON FEELINGS AND ACTIONS RELATED TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

An examination of the above discussion reveals that what was enabling about the Fundiseka school culture were feelings that the culture brought about amongst the school's community. The feelings then resulted in practices that made it possible for the school not only to achieve good performance in academic activities but also in all of the school's activities. Important about these for this study are assumptions about the enabling capacity of the feelings and associated practices.

Integrated focus

The school's commonly-held common understandings had the school community focusing and expending its energies on issues of common importance and benefit. At the centre of these was a focus on academic performance. This had the community not only focused on the activities but also continually searching for ways of improving their performance and assisting one another to achieve the best they could. Teachers also displayed an integrated focus not only by honouring their classes as expected most of the time but also by going out of their way to assisting one another acquire skills and information on content, teaching methods and classroom management as conveyed by rich collaboration among the staff.

In line with their teachers' integrated focus, students not only willingly attended classes but also hardly disrupted them except on the occasion when they perceived a certain teacher's overenthusiastic use of corporal punishment as a threat to their well-being and learning. On this particular occasion the students were said to have boycotted classes in unison until the offending teacher had been suspended. What was

interesting about the boycotts was that the students did not vandalise their school's building and other property, as sometimes happens when students in township schools get frustrated. This was seen as an effort to ensure that the boycotts would not make it difficult to resume classes once the issue had been resolved. Not only did the students not vandalise the school and resources, but they did not attack their teachers either.

Enthusiasm

A 'practice' that also resulted from the feelings related to the school's culture was that of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm was apparent in the vibrant manner in which teachers taught and in which the students responded to the teaching, as described above in the section dealing with the school's vibrancy. The enthusiasm was not only directed towards academic activities but permeated all the school community's activities. Simple activities such as students moving from class to class after each lesson or participating in extramural activities all had enthusiasm written all over them.

Empowerment

One other reason the school culture enabled teaching and learning was that the culture was empowering to the school community. Bringing about the empowerment was that the school culture brought about self-confidence and produced a sense of well being in the community. Bringing the self-confidence about was, among other things, the school's practices of encouraging its community to tackle desired activities, including those related to good academic performance, without fear of failure or ridicule. The confidence then saw, for example, the school community not aiming for targets set down either by the national or provincial department of education but instead determining its own academic goals. This had, for example, been the case when the principal encouraged staff to focus on quality rather than 'quantity' matriculation examination passes.

The self-confidence was just not only apparent in individuals in positions of authority but was also quite widespread even among students. The students had, for example, been sufficiently confident to approach their 'superiors' with innovative ideas that the

students felt would be to the benefit of their development. One such example was the initiation by the RCL of debating workshops with neighbouring schools to be led by township students attending advantaged suburban girls' school. Also illustrating the students' self- confidence and empowerment was a response by one of the interviewee students that:

> *There are also groups that represent a lot of things that involve students. It is not necessary for students to always be running to teachers for help, they can go to other learners and seek help.*

The school community's self-confidence also saw it taking initiatives to establish beneficial networks with both local and overseas institutions. One of the teachers had, for example, initiated a teacher exchange link with a UK school that saw the UK school raising funds for the school, as described above.

CONCLUSION

Findings with respect to the Fundiseka school culture were that what was enabling about the culture was its integrating and empowering nature. What was found to be particularly integrating about the school culture were negotiated common understandings and feelings related to such understandings. The common understandings were that the school was basically about holistic development, excellence and related behavioural norms such as hard work, discipline and rule-following. An advantage of the common understandings for the school's academic performance resided in the resulting concerted efforts. Feelings related to the common understandings included, among other things, the sense of belonging, individuality, trust, issue-based respect, inclusivity and equity.

It is however important to note that Fundiseka integration did not always point to consensus. What was enabling for the school regarding occasional dissention was the manner in which the school's leadership negotiated these. The negotiations resulted in an empowerment that was enthusing to the school community's efforts, hence the resultant good academic performance. Leadership deductions for the formation of

school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS as drawn from the manner in which the sample schools' leadership negotiated or failed to negotiate common understandings are discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 5

UMZAMO'S SCHOOL CULTURE AND ASSOCIATED LEADERSHIP: ALIENATING AND DEMORALISING FRAGMENTED UNDERSTANDINGS

This chapter provides a description of the school culture and leadership found to be associated with the poor academic performance of Umzamo High School. As with the previous chapter, the chapter begins by describing the school's physical, human and curriculum attributes before proceeding with the description of the school members' activities and interactions. Similarly, this description is also then followed by an account of the values, beliefs and assumptions found to be underpinning the school members' actions and interactions and the effects that these were found to have on the schools' academic efforts.

The term 'community' used in the previous chapter to refer to individuals populating the school is in this chapter substituted with the term 'population'. This is because, unlike the group of people populating Fundiseka, individuals populating Umzamo hardly displayed communal characteristics, as will become evident as discussion progresses. Striking about the school culture, instead, was fragmentation and an alienation and lethargy that resulted from the fragmentation.

UMZAMO'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The school is located at Ntuzuma, a township situated about 30 – 40 kilometers north of Durban constituting a northward extension to KwaMashu Township. The township came into being as KwaMashu Township began to be perceived as becoming too big a unit to be administrated efficiently. As time went on, the township itself 'became' too crowded to cope with migration patterns and as a result informal settlements came into being in the area surrounding it. Part of the school's student population, about 40%, resided in these settlements.

Like Fundiseka, the school was established during the mid 1980s unrests and, in a further similarity to Fundiseka, went on to become one of the township's very few

shining stars in terms of academic achievements. However, contrary to Fundiseka, the unrest took its toll on the school's academic performance in the 1990s to the extent that for the previous ten years the school's matriculation pass rates had been hovering in the vicinity of 20%. The drop was so drastic that in 2002 the school was threatened with closure if it failed to reach the stipulated 40% minimum by the end of 2003. This forced the school to adopt the 'strategy' that found only ten of its 2002 Grade 11 class of 200 students promoted into its 2003 Grade 12 class, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Unlike the Fundiseka student body, Umzamo's was said to have gone on multiple and destructive strikes stretching from the late 1980s to early 1990s. The strikes were said to have involved intimidation, the setting on fire of staff vehicles, and on one occasion ended in the death of a student after he had been set alight in the schoolyard. One of the effects of the unrest was the principal's displacement from the school for a period of three years following claims that he had been embezzling school funds. These riots saw students demanding that the principal be removed from his position. In response to the demand and to the fact that the riots were disrupting teaching and learning, the district education office had the principal displaced from the school and reporting daily at the office. The after-effect of the displacement was that it furthered fragmentation among the school's population. This resulted in a certain section of staff being perceived as 'principal's people' while another was perceived as 'the deputy principal's'. A third group of the staff was constituted mainly of unionized teachers perceived as being 'neutral' and, as a result, concerned only with the school's transformation.

Illustrating the divisions was, among other things, the perception by the principal that all of the HoDs were the female deputy principal's 'people'. Bringing this perception about was the fact that all of the HoDs had been promoted during the principal's displacement. Alluding to such a perception by the principal was, among other things, the following interview response by one of the HoDs:

> *Also we are labeled by the principal as Mrs ... 's (DP) group. Why, because we got the post when the principal was not in (displaced) - when the principal came here (back) he tells these other teachers that he is never, - he will not recognize us as the*

SMTs. So now that thing - now, whatever we say, there is no trust - that is how I can put it, among us.

Staff perceived as being in the principal's corner as consisted mainly of 'contract' staff. This perception, as voiced in informal chats, came about because these teachers had been recruited by the principal, and resided outside Ntuzuma in the same township as the principal. Also included in this grouping was a group of teachers who had been instrumental in contributing to the principal's return by convincing the district office that the claims resulting in the principal's displacement had been untrue. The principal claimed that the group had since found out that it had been the parent section of the school's governing body that had concocted the claims.

THE SCHOOL'S MATERIAL, HUMAN AND CURRICULUM ATTRIBUTES

Like Fundiseka, Umzamo's physical and human milieu was not any different from the general township school population in the country. There were, however, some minor differences between the two sample schools in this respect.

Material resources

Resources at both Umzamo and Fundiseka were regulated by the same Department of Education. As a result, both schools had been subjected to the same resourcing quota. Both schools served an equally poverty-stricken population and were therefore equally not able to have the resources supplemented by 'clientele'. However, despite the seeming equality, Umzamo was much more poorly resourced than Fundiseka. While both schools had originally been provided with an equal amount of resources at more or less the same time as determined by the Department of Education, a substantial portion of Umzamo resources had either 'disappeared' or been vandalized. The two schools had similar building structures (refer to the picture on page 140). Like Fundiseka, Umzamo's original buildings were shaped in a rectangle the middle space of which was similarly utilised for morning assemblies and special occasions (one such observed occasion was an ad hoc announcement related to procedures to be

followed during an upcoming session of tests). The two longer sections of the rectangles housed classrooms while one of the shorter sides comprised an administrative block with the other end comprising two unutilised large rooms. One of the latter rooms was filled with old books and computers and was originally designed as the school's library. The second of the rooms was originally intended as a laboratory and was equipped with various laboratory paraphernalia that were falling apart. Both rooms remained locked throughout the fieldwork. To the south of the original structure was a double storied building constructed when the school extended its limit from Grade 10 to Grade 12.

However, falling enrollments had ten of the school's classrooms standing empty during the fieldwork, utilized only for occasional drama and music practices. Although some of the classrooms were kept locked, others were not and served as home for delinquent behaviour such as smoking and escape through an adjacent fence onto the yard of the adjoining school.

Grounds and buildings

A further similarity between the two sample schools was the level of cleanliness. Umzamo's grounds and classrooms were as clean as those of Fundiseka with the area behind doors similarly littered with refuse. Dissimilar between the schools with reference to appearance was that Umzamo's grounds and buildings were more dilapidated and rather uninviting. For example, most of the school's windows were in need of repairs. Furthermore, classrooms were bare, except for old desks and chairs.

Picture 3: Umzamo High School

Adding to the dilapidation was that the fences had been tempered with by students in effort to provide themselves with escape routes while lessons were still taking place. Adorning both external and internal walls was graffiti, which, unlike that of Fundiseka, was mostly offensive. Forming part of the graffiti were 'uncomplimentary'

drawings of particular individuals. One such drawing was of the school's principal while the majority depicted musical artists of questionable repute (refer to pictures on pages 153 and 154).

Curriculum

In addition to the eight learning areas prescribed by the new Outcomes Based Education curriculum, the school's subject curriculum was divided into the natural sciences, management and human sciences streams. Subjects forming part of these streams included Zulu, English, Accountancy, Business Economics, Mathematics, Physical Science, History, Geography, Agriculture and Biology.

In addition to formal curricular activities, the school also participated on an *ad hoc* basis in few extra curricular activities such as soccer, athletics, netball and departmentally-initiated drama which in 2003, during data collection at the school, had centered round the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Reasons given for the scant extramural activities were that the school had very few resources at its disposal for such purposes.

Staff profile

Umzamo's teaching staff was made up of fifteen males and seventeen females. The school's principal was male. He had been at the school since 1989 and had been promoted to his current position in 1995 but had had his service interrupted by his displacement over a three year period spanning from 1999 – 2001. On paper the principal was assisted by two deputy principals – one male and one female but in reality only the female was functioning as a deputy principal. Contributing to the male DP's inactivity was that his promotion was being disputed with at the Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) by another teacher at the school whose application had not been successful. The dispute is said to have been fuelled by a perception that the selection outcome had been manipulated by individuals not 'on his side'. The DP selections had taken place during the principal's displacement together with those of the HoDs. The perception therefore was that the other applicant

Picture 4: Graffiti in an Umzamo high school classroom wall

Picture 5: Graffiti in an Umzamo high school external wall

had been successful because he was one of the female deputy principal's - then acting as principal - supporters.

Peculiar about the school staff is that it occupied a number of staff rooms and 'offices' on a not too clarified basis. While the school's official staff room was large enough to accommodate all of the Level 1 staff, only ten, all of whom were female, and one female of Department occupied it. Except for the DP who had her own office, the remainder of the female staff occupied a small stuffy room originally intended as a storeroom. The principal also had his own office. All Level 1 male teachers, except for two, occupied one of the classrooms standing empty as a result of decreased enrolments. The remaining two male teachers shared another of these 'empty' classrooms with two male HoDs and the contested DP. The fourth male HoD spent most of his time in another of the 'empty' classrooms. Unlike the rest of the staff whose 'staffrooms' were 'cast in stone', this HoD joined the rest of the HoDs whenever he felt a need for company.

Another striking feature about Umzamo staff was its high turnover and temporary posts. Only about two thirds of the teaching staff was said to occupy permanent tenure, with ten of the teaching staff in temporary tenure for one reason or another. For example, one of these teachers was a substitute for a teacher who been on sick leave for the whole of 2002 and the whole of the first quarter of 2003 while another was substituting for a person on compassionate leave. Also striking about staff occupying promotional positions was that, except for the female Head of Department, all HoDs were either promoted from without the school or had been at the school for less than two years when they got promoted. This was dissimilar to the case at Fundiseka where all the HoDs and DPs had been promoted from staff that had been at the school for periods longer than three years.

Student profile

As already indicated, the majority of the student body was, similar to Fundiseka's, from poverty stricken backgrounds. Also similar to Fundiseka was the Umzamo student female to male ratio of 55:45, representing 162 females and 138 males.

However, the two student bodies differed in terms of age in that the Umzamo's student population was on average older than that of Fundiseka's with quite a number of the former said to be in their mid twenties, while the Fundiseka records indicated that the oldest at the school was 21. Although the exact figures and ages were not gathered, Umzamo teachers often complained that cause of most of the school's problems was that its student body was of 'advanced' age. This was because a large number of female students had had their studies interrupted by pregnancy or for economic reasons. Probably also contributing to the age issue was that Umzamo seemed to be catering for students who for one reason or another had failed to gain acceptance to schools whose academic performance offered them the luxury of choice with respect to students.

Enrolment at the school had as a result of the school's poor academic performance, declined drastically. Also peculiar about the school's student body was that most of it was fairly new at the school. Of the 180 students in the Grade 11 class, less than a quarter had been at the school for more than three years with another quarter having enrolled at the school for the first time in 2003. Further striking about the newcomers was that most had only turned up for registration in late February or early March after having failed to find placements in schools of their first and second choices.

Routine

Like most schools in the area, the school's daily routine began at 07.45 with a formal assembly in the school-yard. The assembly consisted of extended singing sessions that were obviously enjoyed by the student population that attended the assembly. Quite a large number of both students and teachers arrived only after assembly had ended.

Like Fundiseka, the school had a period register meant to regulate subject teacher attendance. The difference between the two schools regarding the issue was that while Fundiseka kept the registers going, Umzamo staff objected to this form of administration, maintaining that the registers gave students power over teachers and that it conveyed a distrust of teacher integrity and/or professionalism.

The school day was divided into six periods of 50 minutes duration, with three periods slotted in on either side of the only break that lasted for 50 minutes. Classes were scheduled to begin at 0800 and end at 14.30 from Mondays to Thursday and at 13.30 on Fridays and pay days. In reality classes began at about 08.30. This is because morning assembly regularly ended halfway through the first period time allocation. This was one reason given by the section of staff who did not attend morning assembly for not doing so. To 'make up for the Fridays', 'half days' and paydays, the school followed a specially speeded up timetable with periods lasting for 40 minutes instead of the set 50 minutes. The purpose of 'half days' on pay days was said to be aimed at enabling teachers to attend to personal month-end undertakings such as the payment of bills and purchase of monthly groceries. This was even though this practice had started at a time when electronic salary payments and late closure of shops were unheard of, and was therefore no longer necessary. A similar practice did not exist at Fundiseka.

BEHAVIOURS, ACTIVITIES, FEELINGS, AND VALUES OF THE UMZAMO POPULATION

Particularly striking about Umzamo school culture was its fragmentation, alienation and lethargy, as illustrated in Table 2 below and discussed in more detail in the rest of the chapter.

Apathy

Not only did Umzamo population engage in few curricular activities, as pointed out in the section on the school's curriculum above, but it also did so in a manner that lacked the vigour that characterized Fundiseka participation. The only time the student population displayed vigour was on occasions when activities held the promise of journeys beyond the school gate. Two such incidences during the period of data collection related to drama rehearsals for HIV-AIDS awareness campaigns organized by the provincial department of education and athletics elimination rounds in preparation for regional competitions. That the vigour was in anticipation of external

trips was alluded to on the days of the events as students congregated at the gate awaiting transport to respective destinations. On these occasions the sense of anticipation had joy written all over participating students' faces, resonating in their conversations and song.

The apathy was particularly pronounced in classroom activities. This was even though all of the classroom observations gave the impression that the school teachers had a good knowledge of their subjects. Probably resulting in the apathy was that the teachers appeared not to be preoccupied with 'delivering' the content for student understanding. Most of the teachers hardly made concerted efforts at helping students understand the lessons, and hardly encouraged student participation in their lessons. The students hardly asked questions of their teachers, and seldom responded to questions asked by the teachers during the lessons. Where student participation did occur this would mostly be in the form of responses of a few students to teacher initiated questions. However, even on such occasions, only a few students would respond with vigour. One of the occasions that conveyed the apathy took place in one of the science classes observed at the school, as described in the following field-notes:

> Mr B. enters the class and greets the students. He introduces me to the class and then goes on to inform the class about the lesson for the day. He then revises the previous lesson by means of a question and answer method. Not many students respond to his first question. The first student he points at gets the answer wrong. His comment is 'not quite correct' whereupon students raise their hands again. The second students give the correct answer whereupon the teacher moves on to the next question without offering explanations on why the first response had not been 'quite correct'.

Teachers also did not seem to make any concerted efforts to create an enabling learning ethos in their classrooms. In most of the observed lessons there did not seem to be 'connection' between teacher and students. This created a very detached atmosphere with students seated apathetically throughout lessons. The apathy was so pronounced that some of the teachers avoided going to class as scheduled. Confirming this was the following extract from the student focus group interview:

Student: *Some of them (teachers) trouble us because they have to be fetched for their periods.*

Q: Does that happen often?

A: *It seldom happens this year.*

A: *If the students are relaxed and not worried about their studies, chances are the teachers will also end up relaxing.*

Q: *In your view it is the duty of the students to show the teachers that they are serious about studying?*

A: *The teachers should also come, but they take it as if we are old enough to know what is right and what is wrong. Then they don't see it as their responsibility, so they must be fetched, how do I say this, that is why they tend to relax and students relax as well.*

The following extract from the same student focus group interview implied that the apathy was equally prevalent among students:

Q: In your view, are people happy with the way things are done here?

Student 1: *Yes they are.*

Student 2: *Then school ends early lets say at about eleven or so, they are very happy. Then you wonder what this person wants with their life.*

Student 3: *They don't even ask why we are leaving early.*

Q: Does the school end early often?

Student 1: *Not a lot this year.*

Student 2: *We do leave early though.*

Student 3: *But if we do leave early we should have a strong reason why, because some people use public transport, but the ones that use public transport relax a lot and not complain that they are wasting money for their tickets.*

TABLE 7: ALIENATING FRAGMENTED UNDERSTANDINGS AT UMZAMO

BEHAVIOURAL DESCRIPTION

Apathy	Guarded friendliness

UNDERPINNING UNDERSTANDINGS

FRAGMENTED GOALS

External imposition	Ambiguous	Restricted development

FRAGMENTED NORMS

Exclusive behaviour	Ill-discipline & slack work	Rule breaking
Unresolved problems	Fragmented responsibilities	Inaccessibility
Conformist & ritualistic respect		

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE FRAGMENTED UNDERSTANDINGS

Hierarchically assumed and disputed 'leadership'	Contrived collegiality

EFFECTS ON MEMBER FEELINGS AND PERFORMANCE

Alienation	Lethargy
Distrust	

Guarded friendliness

As at Fundiseka, a large sector of the school population appeared friendly. However, unlike the situation at Fundiseka, the friendliness at Umzamo was most of the time confined to groups of friends. While this did not mean hostility to individuals not belonging to own groups of friends, interaction among 'non friends' was more of politeness rather than one borne of frequent contact among people sharing similar interests and identities. The impression was that the population had not developed a knowledge about one another that would enable the school's members to approach one another informally or join with ease in conversations among groups to which they did not belong.

Confirming this was the female deputy principal's statement that she was on a venture aimed at creating friendship between her and all members of staff. Her aim was to accomplish this by spending break time with one group of teachers for a period of time and then move on to the next group when she felt her objective had been achieved with the former. While this was well intentioned, it seemed to have given little thought to how the pursuit might be perceived by members of non-targeted groups at any given time.

The guarded friendliness also characterized relations between staff and students on one hand and among students on the other. Except for the female teacher who coordinated most female students' extra-mural activities, it was rare to see students sharing jokes with teachers whether in or outside class. Behaviour in class was very stilted for the most part, except for those conducted by this female teacher where students showed signs of enjoyment as they joined in her class activities. Indicating the enjoyment were student participations that surpassed participations by the same students in other classes. However, despite the teacher's friendly banter with students in class the banter rarely, if ever, transferred itself to activities beyond the confines of formal interaction. At no time were students observed approaching the teacher during breaks for clarifications on lessons not understood in class or joking with her when meeting her on the corridor as was often the case at Fundiseka .

Fragmented understandings

The first impressions of Umzamo's school culture were of behaviours, similar to Fundiseka's, underpinned by common understandings on both the school's goals and accepted behaviour. All the school's members with whom I chatted during the initial stages of data collection at the school had, for example, claimed the school valued education and that all respected one another. However, initial impressions changed as data collection proceeded and interviews and chats revealed rather ambiguous or fragmented understandings. The fragmentation in the understandings was so intense that most of the interviewees either had a problem describing the school's culture and/or its leadership or maintained that the school possessed neither of the two. For example, when asked to describe the culture of the school, an HoD who had been at the school for three years stated that:

> *A: Unfortunately I am not familiar with the culture of this school since I am a new person in this school*
> *Q: How long have you been here?*
> *A: This is my third year. So I haven't exactly identified the actual culture of this school as yet because when I came to this school there were a lot of controversies and many problems so things were changing up and down.*

Further conveying the fragmentation was a vigorously heated and forthright response by one of the teachers who had participated in the teacher focus group, and who had been at the school for less than a year. The teacher's claim was:

> *A: Actually the school does not have a culture.*
> *Q: What do you mean by that?*
> A: *I mean if culture is about norms and standards it means there is no culture here. The school has no norms and no standards. The way we do things here is very fragmented. So all in all the type of culture that exists here is a culture that does not - there is no culture.*
> *Q: There is no culture or there are many cultures?*
> *A: In fact there is no culture because if you can say it's a culture there must be an identity, there must be one thing that you can see that ..., there must be a trend that is followed by the school.*

Conveying the same view was the deputy principal's remark that:

> *The culture that prevails at the moment is different from what should be happening here at school because there are so many influences at the moment. The school is in between two rival groups, the Ntuzuma and the Lindelani.*

However, the deputy principal also held a contradictory view on the issue as conveyed by her statement that:

> *There were changes last year. It's the region, the Regional Offices, they had organized the School Effectiveness Program, so for the whole of last year we have been attending workshops there at Ntuzuma College. Those workshops have done great things. So because now you can see that certain teachers have certain skills. They were there, maybe they did not discover them. During those workshops everyone is willing to do what is right. And then we still have a few exceptions, but on the side of the teachers they are trying their best to do what is right. I think that program was a success. The teachers said "we are sick and tired of this situation, for how long will it be like this?"*

Not all teachers were in agreement with the DP's view. An informal conversation with a teacher whose stand was that the programmes had been a waste of time provided one other illustration of the school's fragmented understandings. This teacher claimed that the workshops hadn't brought about any improvements. However, the following comment by one of the students in the focus group revealed that some students held a view similar to that of the deputy principal regarding improvements in the school's culture.

> ***LFG:*** *It is better now, there are rules now...*
> ***Q:*** *When did you begin having rules? This year? Last year?*
> ***Student 1:*** *It started this year.*
> ***Student 2:*** *But there were a few last year.*
> ***Q:*** *What do you think has brought this change about?*
> ***Student 2:*** *I think it is because a lot of people who were in grade 11 last year- they failed and that is why they decided.*

Fragmented goals

The understandings were so fragmented that the school population did not agree even on what they considered to be the school's fundamental focus. While almost all of the interviewees were quick to claim that 'education' was the school's fundamental goal, probes revealed fragmented and ambiguous understandings on what the interviewees meant by 'education'. For example, a student participating in the student focus group and whose perception seemed to be representative of the group's perceptions judging from the enthusiasm with which her response was greeted by all students in the group stated that:

> *Firstly, here at school if the learners achieve they (other learners) say the school is rotten. It is not together! (slang for weird) That is why the learners behave any how.*

Also, even though all respondents claimed that academic performance was the school's priority, the behaviour of various members of the population failed to demonstrate this claim. None of the teachers offered extra classes either before or after school, on Saturdays or during school holidays, as was the case at Fundiseka. Also contradicting the claim was the school's practice to break early on pay days, a practice that in the past had been necessitated by lack of sufficient transport to ensure that teachers reached banks before closure so they could cash pay cheques and settle bills in time. The school carried on with the practice even though it is located in an urban area and that most of its staff owned cars. Also, this was even though a number of shops had taken to closing late in the evening at month-end.

Adding to perceptions of fragmented goals was students' failure to make great efforts to get as much as they could out of their schooling. Students hardly consulted their teachers for assistance on academic work. Also conveying the school's fragmented understandings was its practice the previous year of holding back almost all of its Grade 11 class in 2002 so that the school could achieve the required 40% minimum to meet the Department of Education's pass requirements for the year! Also illustrating the ambiguity were responses to the question on what the school valued the most, including the following:

> *A: I think it is mostly sport. Soccer, athletics (laughs). We have people competing as far as national. But we are also proud of our singing, we sing and play soccer.*

Q: What about education?
A: No, not really.

Furthermore, responding to a question on whether the school encouraged learning among students, one student claimed that:

> *It is done, although I don't think it is enough. It is also up to the learner to decide what their reasons are for coming to the school. Sometimes learners come to school with their friends. They come to this school because things are relaxed here (all agree).*

Fragmented behavioural understandings

Emerging from data analysis was that understandings on acceptable behaviour by the school's population were as fragmented as understandings on the school's goals.

Ritualistic respect/superficial conformity

As already stated, respect was one of the areas that initially portrayed common understandings about the school's culture. The impression had resulted from observed polite interactions among the school population. However, what the population seemed to regard as respect related to the fact that members never openly disagreed with one another or that they were not openly rude to one another. As data collection progressed, it came to light that the lack of disagreements and open rudeness actually took the form of covert resistance. Students would, for example, simply resist carrying out unacceptable tasks or simply disobey unacceptable rules and regulations, as had been the case with the issue of school fee payment. On this occasion students who had been given school fees by guardians had simply not handed the money over to the school personnel. This was in objection to the perceived unfairness of exempting students of similar poor economic backgrounds from paying the fees. The practice was so widespread that it had been related to me by the school security guard on the day students were being 'chased' out of school to go home to 'fetch' the money or only return in the company of a parent/guardian. The security guard had claimed that a large number of students that had been 'chased' out of school that day had showed him their fees and had insisted that they would only pay once everybody was required to do so. This incident occurred as data collection was about to end. As a

result, data was not obtained on how the issue progressed. However, according to the security guard, this was not a new happening at the school and wasn't going to be the last.

Also conveying fragmented understandings about respect was that the concept did not, for the school student population, extend to respect of property, as conveyed by widespread window breaking, telephone bashing and the habitual stealing of school property such as stationary which was then sold 'at a discount' to fellow students.

Minimal exertion, ill discipline and rule breaking

Also conveying ambiguity regarding the school's culture was poor discipline, minimal exertion and/or rule breaking. As already stated, at no time were students ever observed to be approaching teachers for assistance on academic problems. Also, while teachers appeared to be quite knowledgeable about their subjects, the teachers gave the impression of not being particularly concerned with searching for ways that would heighten student understanding. Classroom observations revealed a tendency on the part of teachers to rely mostly on the narrative and, on occasions, on the question and answer method. In addition, the latter tested 'memory' and rarely challenged understanding, reasoning and/or reflection. For example, the failure to provide correct answers was never observed to prompt explanations in the mother tongue, as was the case at Fundiseka. The teachers, instead, would provide answers and move on with their 'telling'.

Demonstrating poor discipline was, among other things, late arrival in the morning by large numbers of the school population, causing them to miss morning assembly and also causing large numbers of students to also miss a large portion of the first two lessons of the day. Students would, in addition, be observed to be leaving classes through the window as their teachers had their backs turned towards the class when writing on the board. Even though students claimed that the practice was widespread, the school did not seem to be bothered by it. The principal even went as far as to claim that he was ignorant of the practice when the matter came up for discussion during the findings' workshop. This is even though all the teachers present at the workshop claimed awareness of the practice. Interview responses pointing to the school population's poor discipline, rule breaking and minimal exertion included:

Deputy principal: *We still have some disciplinary problems. As I have said everything is gradually starting to move towards a better side. When I look at relations between teachers and learners, the type of group we have this year is not as great as in the previous years because I wouldn't be sitting here with you for more than an hour without a case between a learner and a teacher, there is a problem in class, they have been fighting, one is drawing a gun, one is drawing a knife. This is the type of situation we used to have in this school.*

Also,

Starting from there, starting from discipline, we have a problem with that, we are struggling. As you can see we are carrying canes which we are no longer supposed to have that (sic). But, that's the measure we are using, we have to use force to these... especially because they are undisciplined

Further pointing to the situation were the following responses by students participating in the student focus group interview:

Student 1: *In 1999 we used to leave early a lot. On a Friday we used to know that we would have three periods and then break and go home thereafter. On a Friday we would never stay here until 1pm. It is better now.*
Student 2: *They (teachers) do come, but some we have to fetch...*
Student 3: *Some of them (teachers) trouble us because they have to be fetched for their periods.*
Q: Does this happen often?
A: It seldom happens this year.

A nonchalant nod on the part of one of the teachers in response to a question on whether staff was aware of the practice of a number of male students regularly smoking dagga in one of the unused classrooms during break pointed to a lack of concern over ill discipline and rule-breaking. Also conveying this was the following response by another student participating in the focus group interview:

What I see is the smoking here at school. This does not happen in other schools like Model C schools. If they do smoke they go and do it in toilets, here at school they smoke anywhere. Even if a teacher is walking past they will carry on smoking and say that it is break-time.

Exclusion

Conversations with various members of the school population pointed to exclusive behaviour on the part of a large number of the population. As already stated, male teachers spent their days mainly with other male teachers while female teachers residing in the same township (either Umlazi or Ntuzuma) kept to themselves. This schism was similarly apparent among the student population. Students residing at Ntuzuma kept to themselves, with students from the neighbouring informal settlement also doing the same. The exclusion was said to be reflective of different characteristics, as stated the following extract from an interview with one of the teachers:

A: I think this year about 60% of our learners come from Lindelani. Maybe that is why there is this improvement. 60% of the learners come from that side.
Q: So students from Lindelani are better behaved than Ntuzuma's?
A: Yes. Those are tsotsis. Those that come from the location come with _____.
Q: Why do you think Lindelani children are better behaved than Ntuzuma children?
A: Um, there is a culture that is prevailing there, that is different from the culture which prevails in the location. You see in Lindelani all the schools there are well disciplined. It is because of the structures on the ground, which is being formed. I don't know whether we are... what name can we give them? But it is the Inkatha _____.
Q: Yes?.
A: Yeah, and this side we don't know what is happening. So there are structures on the ground that are looking after the schools so that de_____ are being punished. Because some of the parents can't stand that. They sent their children from that side. But because they are coming from that better environment, where parents are taking the initiative to look after the school, that is why they come with _____. But this side, its vandalism, its _____, its everything and the parents do not care. They have incidents maybe three of four times a year the school is burgled. Some of these criminals they are there in the location. They are known by the people but they are

afraid. So its because of that the community that side is active and this side they are inactive, there is no community participation.

Furthermore, not only did the teachers not consider themselves students' custodians but also seemed to consider the students as aliens of inferior making. Responses alluding to this perception included the following by a teacher which implied a perceived sense of superiority in relation to the students' backgrounds:

> I think the way we deal with them is to go back and check their backgrounds, the home. Maybe some of them act arrogant (sic), but may be they are hiding something that embarrasses them at home. So when you go back and say this one wants to dominate, so you lower your standards to deal with that one appropriately and accordingly, but knowing the background exactly.

Problem overload

What also seemed to be standing on the way of Umzamo's academic performance was the school's low problem solving inclination and capacity and/or inappropriate problem solving strategies. In the past this had resulted in, among other things, violent destruction of property and threat to human life as had been the case when one student was burnt to death within the school's premises; the principal was displaced following suspicions that he had misused school fees; teachers' cars were vandalized, and teachers' lives threatened over ill-conceived grievances.

Late-coming was provided one other example of the school's low problem solving capacity and/or motivation. The practice of late-coming was said to have plagued the school for a long time. A discussion on the situation in one of the staff meetings held at the beginning of 2003 had the staff reaching a decision that no student should be allowed in through the gate after the first period had ended. The agreement was that teachers would take turns assisting security guards enforce the decision. However, only two teachers followed the decision through. These teachers reported improvements but gave up their efforts when it became apparent that the rest of the staff was not honouring the decision to take turns as agreed upon.

Inequity

One other issue characterised Umzamo's culture of disregard for equity concerns. Striking about this was that various components of the school's population not only viewed others as inferior but also made no effort towards improving the lot of those perceived as inferior. Illustrating disregard for equity was, among other things, teacher tendency to respond mostly to hands raised by male students following a question by the teachers. Also, individuals identified as the most influential persons at the school in the questionnaire (see Appendices 3 and 4) were male in the case of both teachers and students. Furthermore, all of the school's class representatives were male students deputized by female students. Also confirming the feature of male domination was the following extract from the student focus group interview:

> *A: We are just the same. The girls see themselves as just girls. They don't see themselves as being important. There is nothing that is being done for the girls to see themselves as important as boys.*
> *Q: I am asking this question because in the questionnaire I gave you which asked who the leaders are in this school I got male names mostly. In other schools they usually have ways of making students to also select female learners. Is anything done in this school so that females can be in positions of leadership?*
> *A: They also don't want to have a girl represent them because the RCL is made up of mostly boys. It is just not noticed.*
> *Q: Even with those in charge, is this noticeable with them?*
> *A: I would say that.*
> *A: It is just that girls at this school are scared to speak to the learner - that is why.*
> *Q: Doesn't the school do anything to ease that fear?*
> *A: The school should be playing a role in that, but because we don't have what a school should have, like unity so that learners' needs are heard as well as those of the teachers. Here some people are going west and others in their own directions, there are collisions.*

CONTRIBUTORS TO UMZAMO'S FRAGMENTED UNDERSTANDINGS

Unlike Fundiseka which had a number of 'strategies' that helped the school introduce its new members to its culture and help maintain the culture, Umzamo was found not

to have such 'strategies'. This was probably because the school had no explicit culture into which to initiate newcomers, as claimed by one of the teacher interviewees above. Understandings on what the school was about, or on sanctioned behaviours were therefore left to chance, as implied in the following responses to a question enquiring about this issue:

> ***Head of Department:*** *To be honest, I don't know. Because on my side - I wasn't even introduced. You just see other (new) people.*
>
> ***Deputy principal:*** *We are still working on that. I don't know whether we are still in this formative stage of trying to mould the culture. I can say we do invite people from outside just to help our learners and just motivate them.*
> *Q: Which people would you say you invite from outside?*
> *A: Most of the time it is the religious people. The reverends, the people from the community, so our purpose is there at the moment (?). That is why I said we are still making an effort because as it is, even this year we are not in a position to deliver a speech day. Although we have talked with the principal that we are going to try and motivate them by at least having one awards day, but I don't know whether we are going to have enough funds of doing that. We have just talked and it has not been disseminated to the teachers. It is still there. But we are still looking in getting people to come and help us. Instead our main focus is getting the learners, moving out and seeing the environment on the outside. Because we do have a program where we shall be sending learners to different schools, we are negotiating with those schools. Especially the Grade 12s and the Grade 11s then we shall take them to certain schools just to see the environment and the culture and how they learn, just to communicate with them. We are trying to network. ... So this is what we are in the process of doing. But in this inviting people to come here and organizing functions, and even, we can still do that by having some projects involving the community.*

Also pointing to lack of enculturation practice at the school were responses from students who participated in the student focus group, including the following:

> ***Q:*** *At this school what would you say is done to let students know what is expected of them?*
>
> ***Silence***

Q: Is there nothing done?

Student 1: *It happens sometime that... no there is nothing.*

Q: So if new students come to this school, nothing is really done to let them know what this school expects from them?

Student 1: *When you come here... (whistles)*

Student 2: *The principal tries to tell them about the uniform, that the uniform should be worn in full and hair should be neat. He tells those with dreadlocks to cut them, but they don't.*

Student 3: *What I see...*

Q: just one second, when they are told to wear the uniform and cut their hair what is done to ensure that this happens?

A: *The principal follows them but no final decision is ever made because even concerning school fees, he had said that if fees weren't paid that person would not write exams. Everyone ended up writing though and I suppose those that do not wear uniform will be followed until the end of the year.*

Q: You are only talking about the principal, what about the other teachers?

A: I just notice the principal doing something about uniform. Others just comment about it.

Even though the school appeared not to have strategies in place to develop and maintain a culture that would enable teaching and learning, the study identified a number of factors, presented below, as being responsible for the fragmented and ambiguous understandings.

Externally determined criteria

In the absence of internally-driven understandings, the school relied on externally determined goals as 'driving forces'. For example, driving the school's matriculation examination aspirations was a threat by the Department of Education to close the school if its matriculation pass rates failed to meet stipulated minimum requirements of 40%, as conveyed by the following deputy principal's comment:

The teachers, they do accept everything because they also want change. It has been two or three years we are receiving letters from the Department of Education threatening to close down the school. So, if the school is closed what is going to

happen to us, we are going to be desperate. So, because they know what they are facing, most of them, everybody, most of us, we want change.

Restricted/fragmented student development

Linked to the above dependence on externally determined educational criteria was a restricted conception of professional responsibility on the part of the school's teachers. A number of incidents gave the impression that the school's teaching population perceived its commitments as being restricted to instrumental classroom teaching. This had the teachers holding 'allegiance' only to the employer and hardly to fellow colleagues, students or parents. Useful about such a strategy was that it relieved the teachers from stress brought about by threats of failure to achieve self imposed goals demanded by extended professionalism (Broadfoot, et al., 1988). This is particularly the case when context prevents the practice of the ideal even among the 'best' of schools, as was found to be the case in a study conducted by Harley, et al. (2000) on historically disadvantaged but academically well achieving South African schools. Striving for the stipulated 40% pass rate minimum was therefore more achievable and more morale building than would have been the case in achieving contradictory self-imposed goals. This had the teachers focusing more on the instrumental order than they did on the expressive. (The instrumental order consists of 'activities, procedures and judgements involved in the acquisition of specific skills' with the expressive consisting of 'those activities, procedures and judgements involved in the transmission of values and their derived norms' (Bernstein, 1971: 160).

Pointing to the above, among other things, was the practice by the teachers of ignoring any misconduct that did not interfere with classroom activities. While the teachers took pains to ensure orderly behaviour during lessons, truancy such as dagga smoking, offensive graffiti and students jumping over the fence during school hours went unchallenged. Also, as already implied, the teachers did not view extra-mural activities as part of their professional responsibilities so much that they hardly made any efforts toward overcoming obstacles to the activities such as those brought about by the school's insufficient resources. Also pointing to the above was the tendency by the school's teaching staff not to take responsibility for the school's poor academic

performance and instead blame it on scapegoats such as the students' socio-economic backgrounds, as described in more detail below.

Indifference

Interviews with various members of the school population revealed that no one assumed responsibility for any of the school's academic dilemmas. Teachers assigned the dilemmas to factors 'beyond their control'. A popular claim by the teachers was that the school's student 'material' was such that nothing better could be expected from it. The claim resulted from a perception that the fact that the 'material' came from poor socio-economic backgrounds meant that it was ineducable. The teachers also claimed that it was difficult for them to instill discipline on students for fear that this might result in physical retribution on the part of students. No such fear existed among the Fundiseka teaching community even though the schools' student bodies shared similar socio-economic backgrounds. Instead, Fundiseka students had claimed that they appreciated the discipline instilled in them by the school.

Also portraying indifference was the tendency by the teaching staff to find satisfaction in laying the blame for the school's limited participation in extra-mural activities on the student's poor socio-economic backgrounds and not putting any effort into finding solutions to the 'restriction'. The claim was that the students' socio-economic backgrounds meant that the school could not charge fees that would help supplement resources and extend participation in extra-mural activities. The teachers further claimed that the students' backgrounds meant that the students after school chores prevented the students from remaining behind after official school hours to participate in the extra-mural activities. Unlike Fundiseka, the school had not taken to utilizing part of its midday break for participation in activities that were non physical or required minimum resources such as vocal music practices. This was despite displays of great musical talents and signs of absolute delight by students over singing, as evident during morning assembly. Also, unlike Fundiseka, the school had not taken to utilizing the township municipal recreational resources to supplement its scant supplies. The only time the school was observed to be utilizing such resources was for its athletics bonanza.

One other portrayal of the teachers' indifference was conveyed by their taking comfort in blaming one another, particularly the principal, for all of the school's woes, particularly the academic. A claim made by the teachers was that contributing to the school's woes was that the principal was a poor administrator, a poor manager and a poor leader. Examples given for such allegations and complaints were that the principal was unable to instill discipline; did not involve staff on critical decision-making; and failed to administer the school, particularly its finances. On the other hand, the principal put blame on the teachers for the school's woes. His claims were that teachers did not implement decisions taken at meetings, that some of the teachers were undisciplined, plotted against him, and at times would not inform him on decisions they had taken and which involved the whole school. One such event had occurred at the beginning of the year when on a particular Friday most students had not come to school with the understanding that the whole school day would be devoted to intra-school athletics competitions. The few students that did come to school were those that participated in the games. The principal had complained bitterly about the situation and blamed it on teachers responsible for sporting activities. The principal claimed that he had been of an understanding that the day would begin with official lessons that would last until 10.00 o'clock after which the school would then proceed to the athletics' field. Teachers coordinating the events, on the other hand, had maintained that the whole issue had been discussed and agreed upon with the principal.

Students similarly did not seem to perceive academic performance as their responsibility. For them, some teachers and students were to be blamed. Responses pointing to this included the following views of those participating in student focus group interviews:

> ***Student:*** *If the students are relaxed and not worried about their studies, chances are the teachers will also end up relaxing.*
> *Q: In your view it is the duty of the students to show the teachers that they are serious about studying?*
> *A: The teachers should also come, but they take it as if we are old enough to know what is right and what is wrong. Then they don't see it as their responsibility, so they*

must be fetched - how do I say this - that is why they tend to relax and students relax as well.

Peer pressure

The school's abdication of its culture initiation role left the student population open to peer pressure, as conveyed, among other things, by the following extract from the student focus group interview:

> ***Student 1:*** *I will start with the learners. The learners have this attitude that they are not concerned with the school at all. Two, there are those who have a problem with those that actually want to learn. Let's say for instance me and my group want to go and study, this group will try in any way possible to discourage us. There are two groups of learners in this school.*
> ***Student 2:*** *They (groups) are formed within the school. Even if someone comes here with the intention of studying, once they get here and see that everyone is relaxing, they end up getting influenced by the older students here at school. Most of these learners are learners who have failed and can see that there is little else they can do and at home they are made to study as punishment, then they carry on with this and end up influencing other learners.*
> ***Q:*** *Are there any disputes between these groups?*
> ***Student 1:*** *Not fighting as such, they just don't want to see the other group studying...*
> ***Student 2:*** *They have all sorts of funny comments about us being serious...*
> ***Student 3:*** *they say we are trying to be serious and what do we think we are going to be. Last year we had to repeat std.9 then we...*
> ***Q:*** *Why did you have to repeat std.9?*
> ***Student 3:*** *We just repeated it, I don't know. We weren't that serious but it looked to people like we were serious. So this year we are making sure that whatever we didn't get last year, we get this year. In our repeating, the ones we are repeating with are the ones that are discouraging us the most. They want to bring us down all the time.*
> ***Student 1:*** *The problem that I have seen with relationships among learners is that the teachers just keep quiet. They think that if they speak up they will be looked at as if they think that they are better. This also jeopardizes their safety.*
> ***Student 2:*** *What I know is that learners are not dangerous as I am a learner as well. If you tell a learner something they will listen because I sit with the learners and we talk even with the ones that do wrong things. The teachers here do not have a strategy*

of how they want their learners to be. Even if there are those who do have strategies, when they bring this up in meetings, there will be those who just turn the other way resulting in things going haywire. If the different organizations could just work together, things would start happening

Also alluding to peer pressure was the habit of non-payment of school fees and widespread rule-breaking, as discussed above.

Contrived collegiality

At the heart of factors that contributed toward the school's fragmented understandings was the manner in which decisions were taken at the school. First impressions of staff meetings attended over the three months of data collection at the school were that of collegiality. However, although the agendas included items to be discussed and agreed upon as the meetings proceeded, it became clear that not all voices had equal status. While certain members would be given opportunities to air their views, such opportunities were denied to others who would have either their raised hands or views ignored. Also, pointing to the practice were interview responses by various school, as illustrated by the following:

The principal: *It (decisions) is usually taken in a meeting. Serious decisions are taken in meetings*
Deputy principal: *We are still very poor there. We do make decisions as a group, that is the teachers and the SMT. But what I have noticed is that most of them they come from top down, instead of coming from the teachers, from the ground and then up.*
Student 1: *I think that the decisions, because we have many departments, although the principal may have the final say, the main motivations come from the departments. Because when you need something or you feel the pressure, you talk to the HoD. He motivates and the principal just says yes, but with great influence from the departments*
Student 2: *This year I have heard that there have been meetings and that they want a member of the RCL to be present so they can be part of the decision making, but I have not once heard them calling any one of us. We just hear the teachers saying that if the next day someone is not wearing uniform he will be punished, that is right but*

we are not consulted we are just told what is going to be done. We are not involved when the teachers come together.

That the above student regarded himself as a member of the RCL provided another pointer to the school's fragmented understandings. While some individuals were adamant that the school did have an RCL, others were equally adamant that it did not. This fragmentation of understandings on the issue had resulted from the assumption that because the school had sent a delegation to attend a workshop for RCLs organized by the regional education office, this had meant that the delegation constituted the RCL body. In actual fact, the school had quickly-assembled class representatives who were available to attend the workshop after receiving an invitation to the workshop. This group was then accompanied by a teacher who had volunteered his services for the occasion. The group was then assumed by some to be the school's RCL, with the accompanying teacher assumed to be the school's liaison officer.

The reason for the confusion was that the principal had unilaterally put the RCL elections on hold because he felt the school's past problems had been initiated by RCLs of the time. The principal had then decided on his own, and neglected to inform staff, that the school needed to spend some time observing elected class representatives before deciding who of the students did not show signs that they would be troublesome if elected into the RCL. What was striking about the decision was that not even the SMT had been informed about the matter. The matter was clarified only during the findings workshop, leaving a number of teachers attending the workshop quite angry over the fragmented understandings.
Also implying contrived collegiality at the school is the following extract from the teacher focus group interview:

Q: From what you have been saying you are giving me the impression that only one person takes decisions.
A: In fact that is how it happens, although sometimes we are called after he (principal) has made his decision and then he tells us this is the situation and then you know the moment we start like questioning those things and we end up in ... there is friction and then you are moving in this group and then you are following that

group. So to try to make as if there is a smooth running and we are all in the same boat you end up not questioning because the moment you start questioning things, you are labeled as if you are now on that group.

Fragmented leadership

Underpinning all of the above was a fragmented influence and a fragmented conceptualisation of leadership. Although responses to the questionnaire aimed at identifying influential people at the school had implied that the school's leadership resided in a number of individuals, actual practices at the school together with interview responses, indicated otherwise. For example, the identified individuals were hardly provided opportunities to exert their influence on others, nor were they provided opportunities to develop their leadership capacity. Instead, the individuals viewed one another with suspicion, and were collectively viewed with suspicion by the principal.

That the identified 'leaders' were not provided opportunities to exercise their leadership became apparent when most students responding to the questionnaire started asking one another for the names of teachers and students they considered influential! This had given the impression that although the individuals were perceived as influential by some students, contact between the potential leadership and the rest of the school population did not occur sufficiently for the students to get to know the individuals' names.

Incidents that conveyed that the principal considered dispersed leadership as a threat included a remark by one of the HoDs interviewed that the principal viewed all HoDs' as the deputy principal's 'people' and therefore as people with whom he was in competition. The HoD claimed that the principal's perception was based on the fact that all of the HoDs had been promoted into their positions during his period of displacement. The explanation for this was that the release of promotional vacancies for the whole province had coincided with the principal's period of displacement. The release was beyond the DP's control. The principal viewed the HoDs as a threat so much that he is said to have informed staff that he (the principal) was against the promotions and therefore would not be collaborating with the HoDs. The information came about in response to a question on why teachers were able to bunk classes even

though the school had a large number of HoDs. The HoD's claim was that the principal's comment had made it difficult for the HoDs to exercise influence over staff.

As a result, the principal did not view dispersed leadership as strength to be channelled appropriately to the benefit of the school. This caused the 'leadership', particularly the student portion, to end up channelling its energies counter productively, as implied in the following extract from the student focus group interview:

> ***Student 1:*** *The leaders from last year were quite bad.*
> *Laughter.*
> *Q: Are they still here?*
> ***A:*** *No, they are no longer here.*
> ***Student 2:*** *The people who were in charge were the ones who were breaking the most rules more than the other students.*
> ***Q:*** *Who chose them?*
> ***A:*** *Class reps are chosen and then among them they choose who is going to be in charge.*
> ***Q:*** *So things went wrong in the selection of class reps?*
> ***A:*** *I can say that because some people choose people they know will be relaxed about rules. They know that if I choose my friend that I usually smoke with, so when it is time to smoke, we will all go together.*

That dispersed leadership was viewed with suspicion not only by the principal but by the whole of the school population revealed itself when both staff and students responding to the leadership identifying questionnaire wanted to know whether by 'influence' the questionnaires was referring to 'bad' or 'good' influence. Such a thought had not occurred to any of the respondents at Fundiseka who all had taken it for granted that the 'influence' referred to positive influence. Pointing to the Fundiseka assumption was the community's positive responses on the school's leadership during interviews. Also, even though individuals listed as influential had given the impression of dispersed leadership, responses to questions on leadership conveyed the opposite. The responses referred to the principal almost all of the time.

'EFFECTS' ON FEELINGS AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The school's culture was found to have a disabling influence on the population's feelings which, in turn, were found to have a negative influence on the school population's activities related to academic performance.

Disillusionment and alienation

One finding of the study was that hardly any section of the school's population identified with the school or, for that matter, with one another. Unlike the Fundiseka community, the school population was never heard to refer to the school as 'theirs'. Instead the population referred to the school as 'this school'. The population spoke of 'these students', 'the teachers', 'the principal' and never of 'our students', 'our teachers' or 'our principal'. What the population seemed to be saying most of the time was:

> *we are here not because we want to or enjoy it but because we have no choice. We will therefore be as late for duty and be in and out of the gate as much and as often as we can* (staff). *We will continue coming here until circumstances prevent us from coming or something better crops up. Anyway, being here is better than being in the street or home alone. Being here sort of provides us with a rather pleasant form of passing away time. We will therefore leave any time during the day whenever we find being here too bothersome.*

The alienation ran so deep that everybody distanced themselves from the school's shortcomings, as pointed out above. Interview respondents desperately wanted it to be known that the school's poor academic performance was not of their doing, but of others. The principal claimed that certain teachers sabotaged the school's academic efforts by not going to class. The school's SMT and groups of teachers, on the other hand, blamed the principal for all of the school's blemishes. Students, on the other hand, blamed some students for discouraging other students from focusing on school work and blamed the school's academic situation on teachers who failed to honour their teaching periods consistently. Most of the teachers were convinced that that the

school's academic woes were a result of the students' poor socio-economic backgrounds, as claimed by the deputy principal in the following response:

> *The culture of learning - teachers are trying, but the material(students) we have - it is no longer the old 'Umzamo' I knew. Because I used to come and invigilate at this school while I was at ... (school name). Then I used to be an invigilator while the principal was still Mr.Z. So what I say is that it is different, it is no longer there. But I can see the teachers are trying, it (learning and teaching) will gradually come back. I think this year about 60% of our learners come from Lindelani. Maybe that is why there is this improvement. 60% of the learners come from this side (pointing at Lindelani).In basis of where they come from. You see these gangsterism that exist in the location, where learners will say you come from section so-and-so, you come from Lindelani, or you come from Ntuzuma. There is that gap. As a result those from Lindelani are regarded as those who come from the dark. So there is that, we still have a problem there.*
> *Q: So, people from Lindelani are better behaved than Ntuzuma people?*
> *A: yes. Those (pointing in the Ntuzuma direction) are tsotsis (hooligans).*
> *Q: why do you think Lindelani children are better behaved than Ntuzuma children?*
> *A: um, there is a culture that is prevailing there, that is different from the culture which prevails in the location. You see in Lindelani all the schools there are well disciplined. It is because of the structures on the ground, which is being formed. I don't know whether we are... what name can we give them? But it is the ... (political party) _____. ... and this side we don't know what is happening. So there are structures on the ground that are looking after the schools so that delinquents are being punished. Because some of the parents can't stand that. They sent their children from that side. But because they are coming from that better environment, where parents are taking the initiative to look after the school, that is why they come with discipline. But this side, its vandalism, and the parents do not care. They have incidents maybe three of four times a year the school is burgled. Some of these criminals they are there in the location. They are known by the people but they are afraid. So its because of that the community that side is active and this side they are inactive, there is no community participation.*

Despite her position of authority, the deputy principal did not feel it was part of her responsibilities to help the school get the student 'material' it needed to get the

'culture of learning' going. She was also not able to explain how and why the 'material' was any different from the school's past 'material'.

Another claim for poor student quality was that a large number of students gaining admission at the school were in possession of forged examination reports after having escaped detection. The school would later learn of some of the forgeries but probably would not be informed of the rest. Another reason given for the school's unsatisfactory student crop was that having a big dropout level, the school was forever admitting into its Grade 11 class a large number of new students rejected by other schools. That new students were admitted at this high level meant that students were still getting used to the school's way of doing things by the time they started preparing for matriculation examinations.

The view that the school's poor academic state had everything to do with the type of the student population also came out strongly during the teacher focus group interview when, for example, one of the teachers claimed that:

> *What, the culture that prevails at the moment _____from what should be happening here at school because there are so many influences at the moment . The school is in between two rival groups, the Ntuzuma and the Lindelani. We have had friction fights between the two groups and you can see that that element is still there. So it has changed everything about "Umzamo". This is really not what "Umzamo" was supposed to be and when I came to this school, I discovered that it was no longer what we used to hear about this school because of this "tsotsi" element that is there. The type of students that come to this school now have a tendency to taint the image of the school and as a result it is no longer the same.*

Linked to the school population's alienation from what the school was about was a strong sense of disillusionment among the population. A number of teachers, newcomers in particular, vigorously voiced disappointment on the school's normal mode of operation. This sense of disquiet was so strong that one HoD stated that he had seen his promotion as progress, but because he was finding little job satisfaction at the school he was now so disillusioned that he was thinking of applying for a horizontal position at other schools if he was not able to get another promotional

position in a year or two. The HoD's disillusionment was so strong that he claimed it was draining all energy from him. This was particularly disheartening to him because he claimed that he was used to producing good grades in his subject and that this was not the case at this school. That the teacher was a hard-worker was conveyed by the number of students that approached him for assistance in his 'office' as I interviewed him. At no other time had this been observed with any of the other teachers.

The same disillusionment was also voiced by a teacher who had initially seen his posting at the school that year as a relief from the long distances he had been driving to his previous post. Before his transfer to the school, the teacher had been driving 100 kilometres on a dirt road each day to and from his previous school. He had thus viewed a distance reduced by more than half as a blessing. He however claimed the reality that greeted him when he assumed his duties at the new school had crushed the sense of relief. Among his complaints was that he had been treated unfairly on his very first day at the school when the principal had informed him that the school did not have a position for him. This was even though the department had posted him there in response to the school's motivation for a relief teacher because one of the school's permanent staff members was on long sick leave. The principal had then left the teacher lounging around for two weeks before assigning him duties. Disillusioning about this for the teacher was that he perceived it as a waste of his qualifications and experience (this is the teacher who had claimed in the teacher focus group that the school did not have a culture – also, that the teacher informed me that he was no longer practising as a teacher when I met him at the beginning of the following year gave the impression that his experience at the school had added to whatever disillusionment he had about the teaching profession). As a result of the disillusionment, this teacher was often at loggerheads with the principal. This was striking considering that the teacher had been at the school for only two months when the fieldwork ended.

Lethargy and low morale

The fragmented leadership had teachers scampering in directions that at times offended the school's bureaucrats. The resulting objections confused, disheartened

and lowered teacher morale and vigour, as claimed by the team of teachers who had organized the athletics bonanza at the beginning of the year. That the teaching population had little or no input in decision making found staff critical of the decisions and, as a result, did not feel compelled to carrying out the decisions, as conveyed by their non-participation in morning assembly. A number of teachers had voiced dissatisfaction with the manner in which daily morning assembly was conducted on the basis that it dragged well into the first period. The objection had been ignored and/or labeled by some as 'satanism' or 'un-Christian'. A number of teachers responded by defiantly arriving after assembly had ended, or if they had arrived while the assembly was still on, they would then sit defiantly in their staff-rooms during the assembly. This occurred in full student view, and seemed to send a message of laxity to students.

Lack of trust

Resulting from the manner in which decisions were taken at the school was a lack of trust among the school's population that denied opportunities to assist one another in areas that might have helped improve the school's academic performance. As already stated, the principal did not trust the HoDs on a claim that the decision to promote them was carried out while he was 'displaced'. In turn, the HoDs found it difficult to trust a principal who was of the view that their promotion had rested on the DP, and had gone on to make such a view known to the teachers. Also conveying lack of trust at the school were the teachers and students. The lack of trust meant that teachers were not confident enough to display their vulnerability and approach one another for assistance on matters related to teaching, subject knowledge or classroom discipline. The same could be said about lack of student participation in class. The low rate of participation, either by answering questions or asking them, gave the impression that students were afraid to expose their 'ignorance' in case they got laughed at or ridiculed.

The lack of trust also saw people keeping a distance from one another and teachers claiming they could not instill discipline on students for fear of retaliation, as stated above. An equal distance existed between students, particularly between students

CHAPTER 6

SCHOOL CULTURES FOR GOOD ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED AFRICAN TOWNSHIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS: PRINCIPLES AND EMERGENT THEORY

Deductions drawn from the school cultures presented in the previous two chapters provided principles that were concluded as framing school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS. The principles are discussed below under two headings, namely, the 'Communo-societal eclecticism'; and 'Context engagement and representivity'. The principles, in turn, provided a framework against which a theory on school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS was generated. Of note about the theory is that it does not correspond to any of the school culture models accessed through the literature reviewed in this study. Instead, the theory comprises of features descriptive of more than one of the models.

An advantage of drawing deductions from findings in this study is that this helped overcome the limitations of the case study methodology regarding generalisability. This was of concern considering that only two schools comprised the sample in this study. What was considered to be generalisable about the deductions is that they were drawn from a comparison of cultures of schools of varying academic performance, with the school of poor academic performance providing a counter case. Further offering generalisability about the deductions is what Hesketh (2004) refers to as 'generalizations as hypothesis'. What this means is that conclusions arrived at in this manner provide hypotheses that may be confirmed or disconfirmed by further research, as recommended in the concluding chapter.

Also of value about the deductions that were drawn in this study is that they provide thick descriptions which, unlike the thin descriptions of quantitative studies, have good capacity for informing practice. This was of particular relevance in this study considering that it was aimed at findings that would help inform the formation of school cultures which in this case refers to school culture that have the potential of

enabling good academic performance in HDATSS. Also of value about the deductions is that, in addition to offering practice informing 'thick descriptions', they offer explanations on what is potentially enabling about the underpinning principles in relation to the academic performance of HDATSS.

Table 6 below, provides a graphic representation of the differences between the cultures of the sample schools and which provided the basis for the principles underpinning the emergent theory.

Table 8: Comparisons between the sample schools' academic performance, school cultures, and school leadership

	FUNDISEKA	**UMZAMO**
Academic performance	Good	Poor
	PHYSICAL, MATERIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE ATTRIBUTES	
Socio-economic backgrounds	Poor	Poor
School location	Township	Township
School 'age'	20 years	20 years
School physical size	26 classrooms (including a converted library)	25 classrooms
Student enrolment	1,200	600
Average class size	45	30
Teacher qualifications	Met the minimum **REQV** 13 requirement	Met the minimum **REQV** 13 requirement

UNDERSTANDINGS ON SCHOOL GOALS, MEMBER ACTIONS AND INTERACTIONS, AND UNDERPINNING VALUES, BELIEFES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Values, goals & assumptions	Shared & consensual	Fragmented
	Holistic development	Restricted development.
	Internally determined	Externally determined
	Clear	Ambiguous
	Integrated	Fragmented
Behavioural understandings and norms	Common & consensual	Fragmented
	Disciplined	Ill-disciplined
	Hard work	Minimal exertion
	Rule-following	Rule-breaking & truancy
	Issue-based	Ritual
	Respect	Conformity
	Varied intra- and extramural activities	Restricted intra & extramural activities
	Extended professional responsibilities	Restricted profess. responsibilities
	Inclusivity	Exclusivity
	Genuine collegiality	Contrived collegiality
Leadership	Ratified	Contested
	Diffused	Hierarchical
	Organic emergence	Imposed
	Diversified	Restricted
	Serving	Self-focused
	Integrating	Fragmenting
Effects	Belonging	Alienation
	Ownership	Alienation
	Security	Insecurity

Trust	Distrust
Integration	Fragmentation
Enthused effort	Lethargy/apathy

The theory that was generated from the deductions that were drawn from the findings in this study was that the school cultures that are most likely to enable good academic performance in HDATSS are those that are communo-societal. In addition, for this combination to be enabling for theses schools, it needs to be pro-communal or what Tonnies (1974) would refer to as 'pro-gemeinschaft'. This label is used in this study to describe cultures that are predominantly communal in nature but which also incorporate some 'gesellschaft' or societal features, as was the case at Fundiseka but not at Umzamo.

PRO-COMMUNALITY/GEMEINSCHAFT

The ensuing discussion is on what was deduced to be potentially enabling for the academic performance of HDATSS with respect to school cultures that are predominantly communal in nature. The discussion incorporates the advantages of incorporating societal features into the communality.

To arrive at a good understanding of the enabling capacity of pro-communality or pro-gemeinschaft for the academic performance of HDATSS it was important to begin by delving into the meanings of both the gemeinschaft and gesellschaft concepts. Tonnies, the originator of the concepts, was of the view that social order is determined by two forms of human wills: 'the underlying, organic or instinctive driving force' which he referred to as the gemeinschaft and the 'deliberate, purposive, and future (goal) oriented' which he then referred to as the gesellschaft (Truzzi, 1971: 145). The former is a feature of groups that cluster around essential wills. Membership in such groups is therefore self-fulfilling. The latter, on the other hand, consists of groups in which membership is sustained by some instrumental goal or definite end. Further differentiating the two groups from one another is that social order in the former group is maintained through the consensus of wills resting on

harmony developed by, and ennobled by, folkways, mores and/or religion. On the other hand, social order for the latter is maintained through a 'union of rational wills'. Such wills rest on convention and agreement, are safeguarded by political legislation and find ideological justification in public opinion (op cit).

Communality

A close examination of what the concept 'community' means provides a good explanation for the power of the concept for the academic performance of HDATSS. What was found to be potentially enabling about communality for academic performance in HDATSS is that, unlike most words, the concept encapsulates a 'feel' to it. Striking about the communality 'feel' is that it:

> ... feels good: whatever the word 'community' may mean, it is good 'to have a community', 'to be in a community'. If someone wandered off the right track, we would often explain his unwholesome conduct by saying that 'he has fallen into bad company'. If someone is miserable, suffers a lot and is consistently denied a dignified life, we promptly accuse society – the way it is organized, the way it works. Company or society can be bad, but not the community. Community, we feel, is always a good thing.
>
> The meanings and feelings the words convey are not, of course, independent of each other. 'Community' feels good because of the meanings the word 'community' conveys – all of them promising pleasures, and more often than not the kinds of pleasures we would like to experience but seem to miss.
> (Bauman, 2001: 1)

Numerous incidents at Fundiseka conveyed the communal 'good feel' while no event at Umzamo was found to convey a similar 'feel'. One such event was the Sports Bonanza held at the beginning of 2003 in which Fundiseka and neighbouring schools engaged in soccer competitions against one another. Conveying the Fundiseka 'good feel' at the event was the enthusiasm with which both the school's teachers and students cheered the school's representatives. Fundiseka's cheering was equalled only by that of one other school of the five that participated in the bonanza. Information

gathered later about this other school was that it was, in the same way that Fundiseka was, one of the few schools that produced good matriculation pass rates in the township. Implied by the enthusiastic cheering by both schools, therefore, was not only the communality but also its enabling capacity for good performance, be it academic or otherwise, in HDATSS.

This 'good feel' was not confined to special occasions but tended to diffuse the school's day-to-day activities. Conveying the feel was not only informal chattering among all of the school members but also formal interactions among the members. The feeling was so intense and widespread that it also permeated corporal punishment. This was even though this form of punishment was illegal and at that time had one of the school's teachers on suspension. The suspension had resulted from a week-long student class boycott in objection to the teacher's lashings perceived by the students to be cruel and inhumane in comparison to lashings by the rest of the school teaching staff. What was found to be responsible for maintaining the 'good feel' during the lashings was a lack of vindictiveness. Such a perception found students sufficiently confident that on occasions they would bargain with teachers over the number of strokes to be administered or over areas of the hand the lashings were not to cover. The following tearful request by a student during a lashing offered one illustration of such bargaining:

> *Please sir, sekwanele. Sengicela uyeke! Sekuba buhlungu kakhulu sir! (Please sir, it's enough! Please stop! The lashings are getting to be too painful sir!).*

Also helping to sustain the 'feel good' during punishments was student conviction of good intentions by teachers regarding the punishments. Incidents that helped convey such perceptions and intentions included comments on one occasion by the DP as he handed lashes to a student who had been caught playing truancy the previous afternoon. The DP had assured the student that the punishment was out of love and was aimed not merely at inflicting pain but at helping the student overcome his truant behaviour. His actual comment was:

> *Mntanami ngikushaya ngoba ngiyakuthanda. Ngikushaya ngoba ngifuna uyeke lomkhuba wakho wokweqa. Angiqonde kukulimaza. Okudlula lokhu sengizobikela*

abazali bakho uma uqhubeka nalento yakho. (My child I am lashing you because I love. I would like to see you to stop your truant behavior. This is not intended to harm you. If the lashings do not help solve the problem I will then have to inform your parents)

The importance of this 'feel' for HDATSS is understandable considering that the schools' historical disadvantages deprived individuals populating the schools of such a 'feel'. The deprivation found a large number of the population exposed to alienating experiences such as rejection, abuse and/or neglect. Such feelings made it difficult for most students and some teachers at these schools to focus adequately on academic performance.

Also potentially enabling about communality for HDATSS and helping bring about the related 'good feel' are the three features claimed by Tonnies (1974) as comprising gemeinschaft, namely: kinship; neighbourhood; and friendship. Issues demonstrating the gemeinschaft kinship at Fundiseka included the fatherly manner in which the school principal interacted with the school community. Such interaction was conveyed, among other things, by the school community's practice of addressing the principal by his clan praise name, as is customary among Zulus when addressing their fathers or other father figures in their communities.

Adding to the perception of fatherhood about the school principal was a claim by the school community that he never failed the school. A number of interviews and chats with the school community revealed that the community relied on the principal, for example, for fatherly problem solving, advice and 'correctional services'. A question posed by a teacher to a troublesome student during one of my observations of his class further entrenched the perception that the principal was viewed by most as a father figure. In this incident the teacher had asked the student whether he wanted his troublesome behaviour reported to the principal or would rather correct the behaviour before such reporting became necessary. An explanation that the teacher gave me following the incident was that such a question always succeeded in eliciting the desired behaviour from students at the school. According to the teacher this was because even though the principal was friendly with students, his wrath, whenever provoked, was feared by all.

In addition to having a father figure, the school also viewed the female teacher identified as the most influential female teacher at the school as a mother figure. Most Fundiseka students addressed the lady teacher as 'Ma' (mother) and approached her for nurturing when in need of a shoulder to cry on or for economic assistance when in need of such assistance. Also contributing to kinship feel among the school's community were perceptions that the members viewed one another as brothers and sisters. This was conveyed by the ease with which all communicated with one another and were also protective of one another. An illustration of the latter was, among other things, provided by the practice by a group of male teachers of protectively guarding the gate at breaks, as described in Chapter 4.

Neighbourliness, the second constituent of gemeinschaft propounded by Tonnies (op cit), was conveyed by the tendency of the school community to help one another in times of need, as exemplified by monetary contributions for bereaved members. The third of the constituents, friendliness, was one of the very first features of the school's culture that revealed itself at the commencement of the fieldwork. This feature was also discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Common understandings

Part and parcel of communality, and forming the basis of the 'good feel', are common understandings. Even though 'community', like culture, means different things to different people, at the core of all the meanings is *'an understanding shared by all its members'* (Bauman, 2001: 10) or a gemeinschaft as Tonnies (1974) would label it. In line with this, common understandings, or gemeinschaft, were found to be at the centre of what is potentially enabling for academic performance in HDATSS. This was found to be the case with the Fundiseka school culture, but not with that of Umzamo. The capacity of common understandings to enable good performance is that they provide a ' *starting point* of all togetherness; provide a reciprocal binding sentiment; represent the proper and real will of those bound together' (Bauman, 2001: 10). For Bauman (op cit) '... it is thanks to such understandings, and such understandings only, that a community of people remains essentially united in spite of all separating factors'.

Potentially enabling about common understandings for academic performance in HDATSS are common goals, actions and interactions - together with underpinning values, beliefs and assumptions.

Common goals

Goals in which the Fundiseka community believed and which it pursued, and therefore contributed to the school's good academic performance, included excellence and holistic development. On the other hand, the reason Umzamo's academic performance was found to be poor was that the school population's understandings on the school's educational goals were ambiguous, and fragmented.

What was deduced from the above was that if actions of individuals populating HDATSS are to lead to good academic performance, the actions need to be informed by common understandings regarding academic and/or educational goals. The importance of common goals for academic performance is that the gemeinschaft 'unity of being' is not based merely on common habitat (community of physical life) but most importantly on gemeinschaft of mind (community of mental life). The strength of gemeinschaft for good academic performance lies therefore in the resultant 'co-operation and coordinated action for a common goal' (Tonnies, 1974: 8).

An explanation for why common understandings on academic goals stand to benefit the academic performance of HDATSS resides in the understandings' potentiality to supplement the schools' historical deprivation of such understandings. Contributing to the historical fragmented understandings were, among other things, the stipulations of The Bantu Education Act of 1953 that apportioned different educational goals for different racial groups. It is thus understandable that a number of HDATSS do not share goals that have the potential of enabling good academic performance. In addition, most students populating the schools were raised by individuals who were hardly exposed to academically enabling understandings, and therefore are not in a position to pass on such understandings to the students. This makes it imperative that the schools inculcate these understandings to their students if their academic performance is to be 'good'.

Behavioral norms

The beauty of common understandings for academic performances in HDATSS also lies in their capacity to generate behavioural norms. The enabling capacity of behavioural norms resides in the acceptability of the norms to all community members and therefore the unlikelihood of behaviours that obstruct others' academic pursuits. Behavioural norms found to be associated with Fundiseka's academic performance but absent at Umzamo and which were deduced to be potentially enabling for the academic performance of other HDATSS include following, as described fully in Chapter 4:

- hard work;
- discipline;
- issue-based respect rather than conformity or fear; and
- rule-following.

Underpinning common understandings on goals and behavioral norms are related values, beliefs and assumptions. For example, underpinning common understandings at Fundiseka was the high value the school placed on academic excellence and holistic development. This was coupled by beliefs and assumptions that the achievement of the desired goals lay in the hands of the school community. What this means for HDATSS is that the schools need to inculcate such values, beliefs and assumptions in their members if the schools are to succeed in bringing about the desired understandings among their members. Fundiseka attended to this principle in various ways that Umzamo did not. One such way was the utilisation of morning assembly to highlight the school's values and sanctioned actions and interactions. An example of such inculcation was provided by the young influential teacher on the occasion when he announced a forthcoming Sports Bonanza. The teacher began his speech by using the old cliché of 'a healthy mind in a healthy body' to point out the importance of sport for academic performance. He also highlighted the importance of participating in sporting activities in that it helps identify and develop talent out of which some of the student body might choose to make a living.

Communal good feelings

Community 'good feels' found to be holding promise for good academic performance among HDATSS included the sense of belonging, shared identity, cohesion, dignity and security.

Sense of belonging

The power of the sense of belonging for good academic performance in HDATSS was conveyed by its presence at Fundiseka, and confirmed by its absence at Umzamo. Pointing to the sense of belonging at Fundiseka were, among other things, spontaneous collaborations among staff and students and between the two levels of membership. Also conveying the sense was the pride with which the school members expressed their membership of the school, as described in Chapter 4. Of value about the sense of belonging for academic performance is that it has school members counting on one another for assistance towards achievements of aspirations.

Also conveying a sense of belonging among the Fundiseka school members was that all of the individuals interviewed for the study only had good things to say about each other. The individuals were also very helpful of one another over issues such economic support as and security protection. Issues that pointed to the latter included the practice by a group of male teachers of monitoring entries into the school premises during breaks in order to protect the school community and resources against undesirable elements.

One of the issues that conveyed the absence of the communal feel at Umzamo was the practice by students residing in the township of viewing students residing in the nearby informal settlement as 'aliens'. This view obstructed collaboration between the groups over both class group work and extra-mural activities. Also displaying the absence of this sense of belonging were responses by the teaching staff that gave the impression that the staff viewed students as 'aliens' to be looked down upon, as pointed out in the preceding chapter. The absence of this sense was equally palpable even among the teaching staff. This was conveyed, among other things, by the location of staff in different staffrooms, based on issues such as areas in which their

homes or residences were located. This practice was discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

Issues that offer an explanation for the power of the sense of belonging for academic performance in HDATSS include the country's historical migrant labour practice and centralized but fragmented education system. The former found township dwellers rarely viewing themselves as belonging to one another, while the latter had the township dwellers viewing education provided in the schools as not belonging to them. There is a high possibility that it was such issues that played a big role in the dwellers' historical practice of vandalizing 'own' schools and, in so doing, obstructing 'own' academic efforts. This lack of belonging probably accounted for politically driven attacks among students attending the same or neighbouring schools.

Integration and cohesion

Also striking about the Fundiseka school culture was the related integration and cohesion among the school's community. An example of cohesion at the school was the readiness with which teachers informally supported one another in their teaching and student discipline endeavours. This practice was not confined to teachers but was also evident in student interactions. The sight of groups of students helping one another with class work during breaks, and before or after school, was quite a common occurrence. Such integration and cohesion was at no stage observed at Umzamo. Also pointing to the potential of these features for supporting good academic performance are numerous studies that have been finding the features characterising school cultures of effective schools, irrespective of contexts and school effectiveness criteria (see, for example, Torrington and Weightman, 1992).

The potential of social cohesion for supporting good academic performance is that it has school community members streamlining their focus and also doing their best to guard against deviations. Offering an explanation for the power of integration and cohesion for academic performance among HDATSS are historical policies that deprived the populations of such feelings by emphasising differences among various groupings in the country.

Interdependence

Another aspect of communality that promises to enable good academic performance in HDATSS is the interdependence offered by communality to its members. The importance of interdependence for performance is that it facilitates survival and prosperity which, in this case, translates to *academic* 'survival' and 'prosperity'. Traditional families (micro-communities) offer a good example of such interdependence. To survive, the families depended on father figures for economic wellness; mother figures for nurturing; elders for wisdom and advice; and off-springs or siblings for household chores.

Interdependence among the Fundiseka community was conveyed by the readiness with which the school community made use of one another's strengths in all its efforts, including those relating to academic pursuits. Another very good example of the interdependence was the school's leadership whose effectiveness rested on its complementary nature and activities, as discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Also conveying the interdependence was the readiness and enthusiasm with which the school community helped one another in times of need. The importance of such interdependence for academic performance in HDATSS is that the schools' members hardly have other sources that stand to help supplement their deficiencies.

Dignity and security

Senses that also result from the common understandings of communality include those of dignity and security. The senses are brought about by the confidence that is built into the understandings about fellow member expectations. As a result, the understandings help prevent members from engaging in activities that threaten their own dignity and that of their fellow members. The resultant security stands to offer a confidence that promises to have the schools' populations undertaking academic ventures without fear of 'losing face' in cases of failure. In addition, this finds members seeking assistance from one another whenever the need arises without fear of being ridiculed in cases of failure. This is in line with Bauman's (2001) conviction that the beauty of being a member of a community and of being with people we trust is a conviction that:

> If we do take a wrong step, we can still confess, explain and apologize, repent if necessary; people will listen with sympathy and forgive us so that no one will hold a grudge forever. And there will always be someone to hold our hands in times of sadness. When we fall on hard times and we are genuinely in need, people won't ask us for collateral before deciding to bail us out of trouble; they won't be asking us how and when we will repay, but what our needs are. And they will hardly ever say that helping us is not their duty and refuse to help us because there is no contract between us obliging them to do so, or because we failed to read the small print of the contract properly. Our duty, purely and simply, is to help each other, and so our right, purely and simply, is to expect that the help we need will be forthcoming.
> (Bauman, op cit)

That the Fundiseka school community could count on each other's assistance without fear of failure or ridicule in cases of 'failure', explains the confidence with which the Fundiseka school community approached its tasks. For example, the teachers consulted one another more often than the Umzamo teachers did. Also, Fundiseka students asked and answered questions in class and approached their teachers outside of class for clarifications in a manner and frequency not observed amongst Umzamo students. Offering an explanation for the importance of dignity and security for the academic performance of HDATSS is historical deprivation inherent, among other things, in the schools' populations' socio-economic backgrounds.

Societal incorporation

Despite the seemingly gargantuan potential of communality for enabling good academic performance in HDATSS, the sad reality is that 'community' stands for a 'paradise' lost or one that no longer exists in its pure form (Gusfield, 1975). What this meant in this study was that even though the integrating senses of communality stand to benefit the academic performance of HDATSS, the existence of communality in its pure form is insufficient for dealing with demands faced by organizations that are as modern and as complex as are HDATSS. While the mechanical solidarity of gemeinschaft or communality may work for rural schools, as was found to be the case in a study by Harley and Mattson (1999), this is very unlikely to be the case for the complexity of township schools, also as was found to be the case in the same study by the same researchers. Instead, found to be more characteristic for the latter schools in

this study were school cultures that leaned more towards organic solidarity than it did towards the mechanical.

Offering an explanation for the capacity of school cultures that incorporate societality into their predominantly communal cultures are essences of mechanical and organic solidarities, as proffered by Durkheim (1933). By mechanical solidarity, Durkheim was referring to a solidarity that accrues from an implicitly collective or common conscience maintained by suppressive public punishment. As already pointed out, the strength of mechanical solidarity or gemeinschaft/ communality for the academic performance of HDATSS is its capacity to maintain common understandings. However, deficient about such solidarity for the schools' academic performance is its inability to address rational needs of 'organisms' that are as complex or modern as are HDATSS. Coming to the deficiency rescue is the incorporation of what Durkheim refers to as 'organic solidarity'. The concept offers an explanation for 'the division of labour in (modern) society'. By organic solidarity the author was referring to a 'contract' that has labour 'divided' according to the complexity of 'organs' (organization). For this study this also related to the formation of enabling leadership, as will become apparent in the related discussion in the next chapter.

In line with the above, deductions drawn from findings in this study pointed to the insufficiency of 'pure communality' for good academic performance in HDATSS. The deductions were that for communality to have the desired 'effect' on academic performance at the schools, the communality needs to be supplemented by 'societality'. Further confirming the impracticality of complete communality, and also that of complete societality, for organizational effectiveness is Gusfield's (1975: 11-2) claim that in actual reality:

> Community' and 'society' do not describe any known, actually existing society nor any of historical existence. They are analytical and not empirical terms; concepts invented to help the analyst think about and talk about change and human associations. As such, they are products of human imagination and not descriptions of a real world. No permanent human association can be found which contains all the attributes of community and none of society; in which there is no division of labour, all actions are void of rational interest and all cooperative activity is regulated by

> bonds of sentiment. Contrariwise, society is never found in any pure form... These limit and distort the application of ... rationality.

The above is in line with Bauman's (1990; 4) observation that institutions that cling to traditional forms of communality in the name of unconditional loyalty and treating 'everything short of such loyalty as an act of unforgivable treason' miss out on what societality stands to offer. In other words, communality and societality should not be mutually exclusive dichotomies for organisations. Gusfield's (op cit) view is that quite often while acting out of a sense of community, organisations also act societally.

In line with Gusfield's claims, also enabling about the Fundiseka school culture was its incorporation of elements of both the mechanical solidarity of communities and the rational organic solidarity of societies. While displaying community characteristics such as 'loyalties, sentiments and emotional ties' (Gusfield, 1975: 11), the school culture also deliberately negotiated for the 'rational achievement of mutual goals' (op cit) through cooperative activity. The succeeding discussion is on how the incorporation of societal features into school cultures that are predominantly communal in nature stands to be supportive of good academic performance in HDATSS.

Enculturation and maintenance structures and processes

One shortcoming of traditional communality for modern organizations is that common understandings among traditional communities were implicit and occurred over a long period (Bauman, 2001; Gusfield, 1975). This was made possible by the stability of the communities but is impractical for organizations as rapidly changing as are HDATSS. These changes are brought about not only by factors external to the schools, but also by the forever changing human compositions of the schools. This results in new students streaming into the schools at all grade levels on yearly basis. Also contributing to the changed compositions is continuous staff movements as a result of issues such as redeployment and rationalization, promotions to posts in other schools or the securing of positions closer to own areas of residences. What is deduced from this is that organizations such as HDATSS need to put in place structures and processes that help not only with goal setting, clarification and reviews

but also with the enculturation of new members into the schools' normative behaviours, as described below.

Enculturation and maintenance structures and processes

Structures utilized by Fundiseka for enculturation purposes and which promise to be equally beneficial for other HDATSS included the School Management Team, RCL and other staff and student committees, as described in Chapter 4. Although Umzamo, like all schools in the country, also did have a structure labelled as an 'SMT' in place, the structure hardly functioned as a culture mediator. That the school did not have an RCL in situ, at least not during the fieldwork period, also deprived it of a student enculturation that has the potential of enabling good academic performance in schools.

The structures and processes that were deduced as having the potentiality of providing enculturation into behaviours associated with good academic performance among HDATSS included notices, morning assembly, school rules, development plans, codes of conduct and participatory decision making.

(i) Notices

One way in which HDATSS can help enculturate their members into desired cultures is by posting notices in communal areas such as staffrooms, classrooms and notice boards, as was found to be a practice at Fundiseka. Although Umzamo was also in the habit of displaying notices in staffrooms' notice boards and on external walls, not a single classroom at the school had such enculturating notices displayed on its walls or notice boards. Notices displayed in Fundiseka classroom notice boards, even though not in all classrooms, included issues such as classroom rules, subject related issues and those relating to HIV-AIDS prevention.

(ii) Morning assembly

Morning assemblies are one other way that offers enculturation opportunities for HDATSS. Fundiseka teachers utilised this enculturation form by regularly reminding students of school rules whenever such a need arose. Even though Umzamo also conducted morning assembly on a daily basis, as did Fundiseka, the school's assembly did not provide enculturation to its members. The school's morning

assemblies instead comprised only of praise singing, scripture reading and sermons against 'sinful' behaviours.

(iii) School rules, development plans and codes of conduct

When approached for the school's rules, 'whole school development' plan and codes of conduct, the Fundiseka principal had readily obliged and further invited me to a workshop that was to review the development plans. The opposite was the case at Umzamo. When approached for the documents, the school principal was initially reluctant, stating that he had drawn codes of conducts in a hurry to meet the Department of Education's deadline and that he had not found the time to update them. Attempts at obtaining a copy of the school's whole school development plan failed not only during the whole of the data collection period but also during analysis following fieldwork and up to the writing up period. This was despite two subsequent visits to the school, repeated calls of request and arrangements to have copies of the plan given to a lady teacher residing in an area not very far from my own residential area. Deduced from this failure was that the school plan was such that the school rarely utilised it for enculturation purposes or that its content was such that the school was not very proud of it and that it had only been drawn to satisfy the requirements of the employing body.

Pointing to the power of these 'enculturing' structures and related processes for academic performance was that all Fundiseka teachers not only conveyed familiarity with the documents, but also conveyed a sense of personal identification with the contents of the documents. On the other hand, chats with Umzamo teachers over the same issue either drew a blank or contradictions. One of the more outspoken teachers at the school had even complained bitterly about a certain section in the 'code of conduct' statement, stating that it was not what staff had agreed on in a workshop conducted on this issue. For this teacher it appeared as if the workshop had only been a sham to satisfy departmental expectations or that the principal had misplaced the minutes of the workshop and had ended up drawing the code on his own and as he saw fit.

(iv) Participatory decision making

One other process deduced as having the potential for facilitating common understandings in HDATSS was participatory/negotiated/consensual decision making. The process promises an ownership that historically disadvantaged schools seem to hanker for much more than historically advantaged communities do. This was conveyed by strikes in recent years by the former schools over issues such as perceived non-consultation, for example, over the introduction of the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) programme. The significance of participatory decision-making for academic performance has been found to reside in the ownership of such decisions, committing participants into doing their best towards the fulfilment of the decisions.

The empowering capacity of participatory decision making was conveyed, among other things, by the Fundiseka practice of collectively determining its own academic goals rather than relying on specifications set by the departments of education, as had been the case with Umzamo. Such self determination resulted in committed foci towards the achievement of own goals. The determination also had the Fundiseka community participating in the school's activities with an abandon and vigour that could only benefit the school's academic performance. Further associated with such determination was the school community's initiation of activities thought of as having the capacity of benefiting the school's aspirations. One such case involved the conversion in 2003 into RCL offices, a room originally meant as a 'kitchen' for the technical section of the school, but had been standing unused since the school began operating. Such ownership and such empowerment was absent at Umzamo, as was the vigour associated with these feelings at Fundiseka.

What was found to be also potentially enabling about the ownership that results from shared decision making is the ownership spill-over into other areas of the schools, including the areas of academic performance. Displaying 'the spill' and its capacity for enabling academic performance was the practice by the Fundiseka members of guarding against perceived threats to the school's academic performance. Conveying this was the school community's guard not just over the school's physical structures but also over its academic activities. Students, for example, made it their duty to report vandalism, as had been the case when one Grade 8 student had approached a teacher to report a student who had broken one of their classroom windows. One other

example of such ownership and custodianship over the school's academic performance was offered by the student who complained to me about a teacher who had refused to conduct a teaching session over the autumn break in the same way that some of the teachers were doing. The 'cry for help' was with an assumption that I had a say over the matter. This was even though my presence at the school had been clarified to all.

Also conveying ownership among the Fundiseka community was the tendency to refer to the school and to each other as '*our* teachers', '*our* school', '*our* students' or '*our* principal'. Contrary to Fundiseka's ownership practice, the Umzamo population tended to refer to others at the school in the third person or as *the school's* belongings, not theirs. The teachers would, for example, talk about 'the students of this school' or 'of Umzamo' or 'the students' while students similarly referred to the teachers as 'othisha balesi skole' (teachers of this school) or 'othisha bala eMzamo' (teachers of Umzamo). This alienation translated to the school members' descriptions of the way the schools did things. Whilst the Fundiseka community tended to say 'we do this and that in this and that manner', Umzamo settled for 'at this school this and that is done in this and that manner'.

Individuality

One other shortcoming of communality for modern organizations is that, in exchange of the security it offers, it finds individuals members deprived of personal freedom and autonomy. Counterproductive about this is that it stifles self expression, creativity and self actualization, all of which are crucial for academic performance. In short, in addition to being an impossible dream, a price one pays for the privilege of "being in a community"' is

> in the currency of freedom, variously called "autonomy", "right to self assertion", "right to be yourself". Whatever you choose, you gain some and lose some. Missing community means missing security; gaining community, if it happens, would soon be missing freedom.
> (Bauman (2001: 4)

What this points at is that HDATSS hoping for good academic performance need to find ways in which they provide their members with co-enabling individuality, creativity and self expression - all of which are crucial for good academic performance. One way in which the schools may accomplish this is by complementing their predominantly communal cultures with appropriate societal features. Fundiseka achieved such complementarity by involving its members in assorted extramural activities including traditional singing and dance, gospel music, and numerous sporting activities and participatory decision making. It was such autonomy and creativity that persuaded the school's students to express their dissatisfaction in non-disruptive ways, as was the case regarding a teacher's corporal punishment perceived by the students as overstepping acceptable scales. The failure to provide avenues for self expression is likely to cause students to rely on inappropriate and destructive means. In addition to playing truancy and engaging in delinquent behaviours, Umzamo students had relied on destructive strikes for expressing their view of unsatisfactory issues at the school. Such incidents had disrupted the schools' academic activities, resulted in poor performance, threatened the lives of others and had the principal displaced for a three year period.

CONTEXT REPRESENTIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT

Also enabling about the Fundiseka school culture, and promising the same for other HDATSS, was that the culture not only reflected the cultural context of individuals populating the school but also engaged this context to its academic benefit. While both sample schools had displayed awareness of contextual issues potentially disabling to academic performance, the awareness had different effects or responses from the schools. While Umzamo had been overwhelmed by the issues, as conveyed by the school members' perpetual complaints about the issues, the opposite was the case at Fundiseka. For the Fundiseka's community the awareness of these potentially disabling contextual issues prompted vigorous engagement with the issues so they would benefit the school's academic performance. Below are some of the ways in which HDATSS may engage and reflect their contexts to the benefit of their academic performance, as modelled by Fundiseka.

Socio-economic engagement

One contextual issue over which Fundiseka displayed heightened sensitivity and engagement related to the students' poor socio-economic backgrounds. The backgrounds meant that most of the time the students were hardly in a position to posses even the most basic educational resources such as calculators, let alone uniforms and equipment for participation in educationally beneficial extra-mural activities. Also 'constrictive' about the backgrounds were after school chores that prevented most of the students from participating in after school extramural activities. Fundiseka overcame the 'restrictions' by engaging the socio-economically related dilemmas mostly by:

- actively raising funds to purchase educational resources and finance extra-mural activities. The school's good academic performance went a long way towards putting the school in a position for securing desired sponsorships. Funds raised on the school's behalf by the UK school with which Fundiseka had a link provided just one example of such sponsorships. On the other hand, whatever sponsorship Umzamo had secured in the past had dried up with one company actually promising to resume its sponsorship if and when the school's academic performance improved.
- utilizing township resources wherever its own fell short. Resources utilised in this manner included playgrounds and a swimming pool. This was contrary to the disabling Umzamo practice of settling to blaming its scarce extramural activities on student poverty.
- networking with more advantaged neighbouring schools to overcome some of its disadvantages. The link with a UK school was one example of such networking. This networking saw the UK link raising funds on behalf of Fundiseka and also hosting Fundiseka's technical HoD in an exchange programme. One other example of such networking involved the debating workshops with neighbouring schools led by students attending an advantaged suburban school. These workshops were initiated by the school's RCL.

The following are ways in which Fundiseka engaged potentially disabling contextual socio-political issues and which if similarly engaged by other HDATSS promise to be equally enabling for them.

Time scheduling

As already indicated, time limitations prevent most students attending HDATSS from participating in educationally beneficial extra-mural activities. This is because most of the students need to be at home soon after school to attend to household chores such as cooking and/or taking care of younger siblings. In addition, students who can afford to stay behind after school often choose not to because this means walking home alone without the protection offered by fellow school mates against abusive elements. The manner in which Fundiseka responded to the restrictions was by utilizing breaks for participation in not too physical extra-mural activities such as singing and drum majorette rehearsals. The benefits of the practice were discernible from the vigour with which students participated both in the activities and in class afterwards. This was contrary to the lethargy displayed by Umzamo students throughout the day and whose lengthier break was mostly spent on food consumption, truancy, cigarette and dagga smoking and chats with friends.

Political affiliations

School activities of individuals populating HDATSS are, to varying extents, shaped by political affiliations. The affiliations sometimes result in clashes that disrupt classes, discourage cooperation, and prevent trust among the schools' populations. Although such interferences are on the wane, some schools still have interactions determined by such affiliations resulting in distanced contact among members, as was still the case at Umzamo. While the school is located in an ANC aligned part of the township, a sizeable number (about 40%) of its student body resided in nearby informal settlements aligned to the IFP. As a result, the school's student body consisted of sections affiliated to either of the parties. Relationships between the two groups were unchecked by the school and, as a result, were underpinned more by the affiliations than they were by a sense of belonging to the same school.

While Umzamo settled for mere acknowledgement of the situation or to offering it as an excuse for its academic woes, Fundiseka went out of its way to bring about a

common identity and belonging among its community. One way in which the school achieved this was by regularly celebrating what the school was about. In most of the cases this would involve relating the school's academic achievements or what such achievements held in store for the students' futures. Such engagements included inviting ex-students who were succeeding in making their mark after matriculating from the school as guest speakers in the school's prize –giving events. Such acknowledgements also involved the announcing of achievements by fellow school members at assembly or by displaying awards related to the achievements in the principal's office.

Schools' histories

One other way in which HDATSS may engage context to their benefit is by consistently relating positive aspects of their histories to their members. Such a stance certainly helped Fundiseka shape its school culture in an enabling way. There is also a broader literature pointing to the value of such practices being part of school cultures of effective schools (see, for example Beare, 1989). While Fundiseka acknowledged and utilized its history to influence the school community's attitudes and actions to the benefit of its academic performance, Umzamo settled for finding solace in blaming its history for its poor academic performance. Activities that had Fundiseka utilizing its histories to the benefit of its academic performance included the ex-principal's farewell party, prize-giving days and morning assemblies. All speeches made at the farewell party, for example, had made mention of, and celebrated, the ex-principal's success at having paved the way for the school's academic achievements. As already indicated, also providing 'histories of successes were the school's ex-students who were making their mark and who the school invited as guest speakers during Prize-Giving ceremonies. A related event observed during fieldwork involved a speech at morning assembly by the previous years' RCL presidents. Enabling about the speech was that the ex-president had reminisced about how his experiences had both benefited and interfered with his studies, and he proceeded to offer lessons regarding the latter to the succeeding RCL.
Umzamo provided no evidence of similar practices. The school population was instead inclined to settle for story telling about the school's perceived past disablements. For example, the student focus group interview had students

complaining bitterly about past RCLs and lack of staff commitment as evidenced by early closures on Fridays and pay days. Staff similarly found solace in lamenting past strikes, poor examination results and conflicts, as evidenced in the following responses by one of the teachers:

> *The 'B' class there has so many repeaters and they were smoking dagga last year. So they are continuing with this. Same applies here (pointing at another classroom), the boys who are problematic here are those boys who were repeaters last year. So that is that.*

Context reflection

Also deduced from the findings of the study as potentially enabling for the academic performance of HDATSS are school culture features that reflect cultural backgrounds of the schools' populations. Two such features, as portrayed in the Fundiseka school culture but not in that of Umzamo, are vibrancy and 'ubuntu'.

Vibrancy

Found to be particularly enabling about Fundiseka's school culture for the school's community was its vibrancy. On the other hand, found to be particularly disabling about Umzamo school culture was lethargy among the school's members. Potentially enabling about vibrancy for individuals populating HDATSS is that it reflects African cultures, as claimed by findings cited by Irvine (1995). The findings are that characterising most African cultures are 'movement' and 'verve'. The vibrancy or verve had the Fundiseka community undertaking all its activities, including the academic activities, with a vigour that accounted for the school's academic performance when compared to that of Umzamo where such vigour did not exist. (The differences were described in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5).

Ubuntu

Also deduced to be potentially enabling for the academic performance of HDATSS is a school culture that is underpinned by 'ubuntu'. Underpinning *ubuntu* are features such as interdependence, communalism, reconciliation, forgiveness, humility and

solidarity (Mbigi, 1997 Even though 'ubuntu' is not an exclusively African concept, its central importance for the continent means that its absence is particularly disabling for individuals of 'African culture'. What this means is that a school that does not promote 'ubuntu' is highly unlikely to be enabling for HDATSS. In line with this, Fundiseka's school culture proved to owe a great deal of its enabling capacity to this concept. An example of 'ubuntu' at the school included its going out of its way to offer support to the school's needy. Even though this was also part of Umzamo's culture, the scope and intensity differed, with that of Fundiseka being broader and deeper. Demonstrating the differences were class boycotts at both schools. For example, while the Fundiseka student class boycotts over the teacher perceived as abusing his power while administering corporal punishment had not involved violence and vandalism, the opposite was true with Umzamo's protestations over perceived misappropriation of funds.

CONCLUSION

Two basic principles were deduced as having the capacity of supporting good academic performance in HDATSS. One of these was that such school cultures are integrating and empowering. Such cultures were deduced to be predominantly communal or gemeinschaft in nature. The second of the principles was that such school cultures also reflected and engaged context to the benefit of the schools' performance.

Predominantly communal/gemeinschaft refers to school cultures which while mainly communal in nature also incorporate societal or gesellschaft features. The advantage of communality for the academic performance of the schools was deduced to reside in its integrating capacity as derived from common understandings about the schools' goals and acceptable behaviour. Of major importance about such understandings are resultant concerted efforts and actions that are not only acceptable to all but also associated with good academic performance. Also potentially enabling about communality are associated good feelings. Deduced to be of importance about the feelings for the schools' academic performance was that they made up for historically-related deprivations. One disadvantage of communal cultures is that their

common understandings develop implicitly over time. This was deduced to be impractical for the complex nature and fluid composition of the schools. The advantage of incorporating societal features into school cultures that are mainly communal nature therefore lay in the feature's capacity to negotiate enculturation. What was deduced as having the potential of supporting good academic performance at the schools about school cultures that reflect the schools' contexts was familiarity. On the other hand. deduced as potentially enabling to the academic performance of the schools about school culture that engage the school's context, is the resultant supplementation of the schools' historical deprivations.

A theory that emerges from the above deductions is that school cultures that promise to benefit the academic performance of HDATSS are those that are integrating and empowering and that such integration and empowerment results from negotiations. The next chapter focuses on leadership implications for such negotiations.

An examination of the emergent theory reveals that the type of school cultures that stand to benefit the academic performance of HDATSS do not correspond to any of the school culture models accessed in the literature reviewed in this study. Instead, the school cultures were deduced to be constituted by a combination of features characterising a number of these models. Also deduced to constitute the school culture were some of the features that research has been finding to be characterising school cultures of effective schools. Of particular relevance about the review therefore was exposure and sensitisation to the features and to possibilities that they may also characterize the school cultures. Also of particular relevance about the review is that it facilitated a conceptualisation of school culture that went beyond the readily visible levels of culture to incorporate underlying values. beliefs and assumptions. Although the latter constituents of the concept were not explored in great detail. the constituents offered explanations for the enabling capacities of principles deduced as standing to benefit the academic performance of HDATSS.

CHAPTER 7

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL CULTURES ASSOCIATED WITH GOOD ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED AFRICAN TOWNSHIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The three previous chapters provided findings from which deductions were drawn on leadership implications for the formation of school cultures that promise to support good academic performance in HDATSS. Similar to the emergent theory on potentially enabling school cultures for the academic performance of HDATSS, as discussed in the previous chapter, the implications were deduced to be made up of a combination of features of various leadership models and approaches. These implications are presented in this chapter in three sections. The first is on school cultures deduced as being enabling to the formation of a leadership associated with school cultures that support good academic performance in HDATSS. This is followed by a discussion on features deduced to characterize this form of leadership. The last of the sections discusses a leadership conceptualisation deduced as most likely to be associated with the formation of this type of leadership. The generalisability of the implications was facilitated by the same issues that made the generalisability of principles presented in the previous chapter possible.

SCHOOL CULTURES ASSOCIATED WITH ENABLING LEADERSHIP IN HDATSS

One of the fundamental implications deduced from findings in this study was that for HDATSS to possess leadership that enables the formation of school cultures presented in the previous chapter, the school cultures themselves need to enable the emergence of such a leadership. Pointing to this was the Fundiseka leadership whose enabling capacity was found to have resulted from a school culture that enabled its formation. Confirming such a deduction was that while the Umzamo school culture

owed its disabling capacity to the school's disabling leadership, the leadership itself similarly owed its disabling capacity to the disabling school culture.

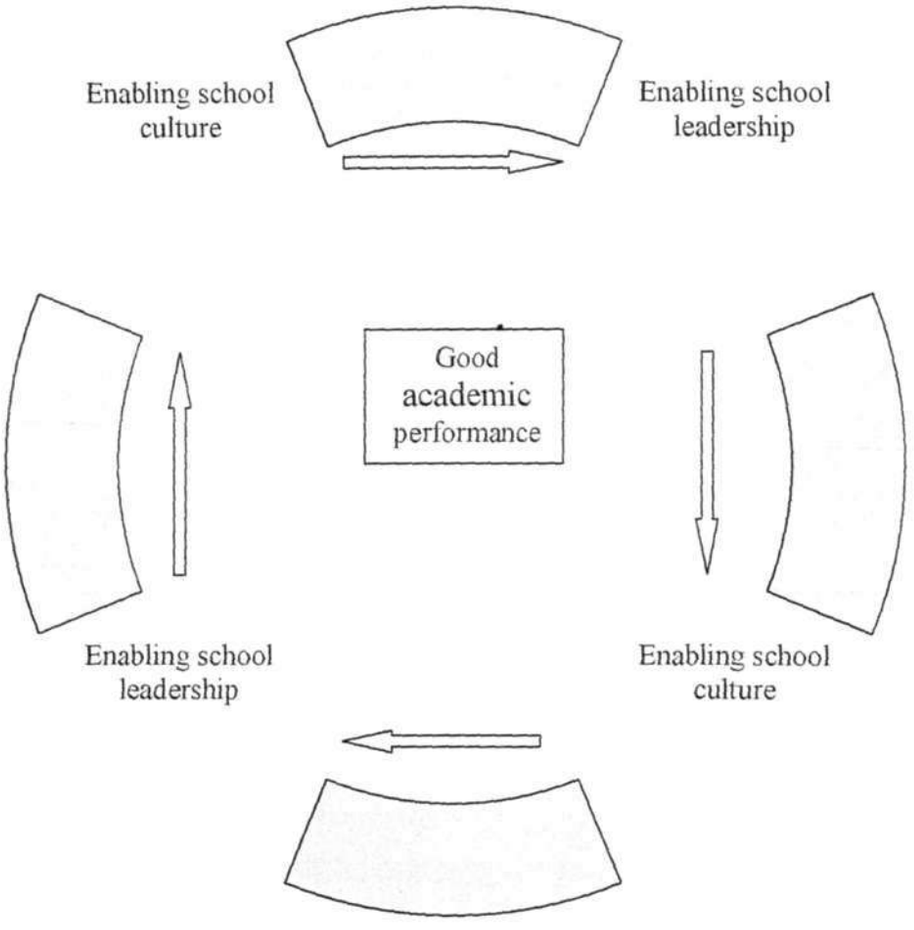
While the formation of school cultures has for some time been known to be dependent on related school leadership, as pointed out in Chapter 2, the reverse has not, to my knowledge, so far been offered as a possible explanation for the formation of particular leadership. Figure 1, below, illustrates this symbiotic interaction at Fundiseka and its capacity for enabling the formation of leadership associated with school cultures that support the academic performance of HDATSS. The circular nature of the diagram points to interdependence between school cultures and school leadership. A similar figure could be drawn to depict the symbiotic relationship between the disabling school culture and disabling school leadership that existed at Umzamo. The difference would be the substitution of the word 'enabling' with the word 'disabling'.

Informal organic leadership emergence

What was deduced to have made the development of the above relationship possible at Fundiseka was that the school's culture had enabled its leadership to emerge in a predominantly organic and informal manner. Such emergence resulted in a leadership that the school community found acceptable and which, as a result, it had ratified. One of the issues that pointed to the ratification was that all of the individuals identified as influential members by the Fundiseka community had actually been found to be actively influencing the community's attitudes and activities. Furthermore, the reason the leadership was ratified was because, having emerged organically, it was not only acceptable to the school's community, but also reflected the community's leadership needs and preferences. In turn, the ratification enabled the leadership to influence the school community's attitudes and behaviour not only in a manner that was acceptable to the community, but also in a direction with which the community identified. An issue that pointed to this was that the school community not only accepted the leadership but also assisted it in its activities. For example, the lady teacher identified as one of the most influential individuals at the school not only had

school members seeking her services, but also had a large cohort of students volunteering their services as peer counselors under her tutelage.

FIG 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENABLING SCHOOL CULTURE, ENABLING LEADERSHIP AND GOOD ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE



While Fundiseka enabled its leadership to emerge in a largely informal and organic manner, Umzamo had simply discouraged and/or obstructed leadership emergence in

whatever manner. One issue that hinted at the latter was that individuals identified as being influential by the school population in the questionnaire administered for this purpose were not found to be actually influencing the population's attitudes and activities. Instead, the school's history indicated that whatever influence the leadership might have had on the school's population in the past had not been to the benefit of the school, including its academic performance.

Another pointer to the absence of informal organic leadership emergence at Umzamo was the school's failure to constitute an RCL at the beginning of 2003. The reason for the failure was that the school population, particularly the principal, had not been certain of who among the students had the leadership potential for occupying the RCL positions. Such ignorance was deduced to have resulted from the school's failure to provide potential student leadership with opportunities to demonstrate its potential. For example, unlike Fundiseka, Umzamo did not have many committees that served as arenas for such a purpose. Other than the Student Christian Movement committee, no other student committee was identified during the fieldwork. Also, except for the list consisting of staff committees hanging on a wall in the principal's office, no activity had pointed to the existence or activities of such staff committees, except for the Sports Committee and meetings of the SMT.

Also pointing to organic leadership emergence at Fundiseka was the school community's consensus on who its leaders were. The community members had not only provided similar names of individuals perceived as being most influential at the school, but also displayed no qualms in providing the names during interviews. Further pointing to organic emergence was the ease with which the school elected its members into official positions of leadership, as had been the case when class representatives elected one another into RCL executive portfolios. Once the procedure and requirements for various portfolios had been explained to the representatives by the teacher liaison officer and his deputy, the body had experienced no difficulty in electing one another into the portfolios. The announcement of the RCL membership the following day at morning assembly was greeted with a jubilation that pointed to consensus on the acceptability of the elections. What this meant in this study was that the reason the elected members were viewed by all as leaders was because prior to this the school's culture had enabled the leadership to demonstrate its potential.

Contrary to the above, the Umzamo population had given the impression that its understanding of leadership was confined to individuals occupying official positions of authority. Even though the school's list of individuals perceived as influential had included individuals not in such positions, interview responses and observations failed to confirm the leadership listing. For example, while both schools had listed their principals as the third most 'influential' individuals at the schools, observations indicated that for the Umzamo student population this translated to fear rather than influence borne of cordial respect, as had been observed to be the case at Fundiseka. Incidents that pointed to Umzamo students' fear of their principal school included the students' habit of shouting warnings to fellow students to stop unacceptable behaviour whenever the principal approached. Furthermore, on no occasion was the principal seen to be engaging in behaviour that resulted in willing 'followership' as had often been the case at Fundiseka. An example of the latter was the school community's perception of the principal as a father figure, as described in Chapter 4.

Other incidents that provided examples of organic leadership emergence at Fundiseka included the drum majorette rehearsal, also as discussed in Chapter 4, where a student had prompted her fellow participants to begin rehearsals while awaiting the activity's teacher coordinator. As it happened, this girl was one of the students elected as class representative and further elected into the RCL Executive Committee at the beginning of the following year. Also serving to convey the organic leadership emergence was the 2003 RCL President's response to a question on why he thought he had been elected to his position. His response had been that his election was because the student body had identified his leadership potential from his various activities and forms of participation in the school. Part of his response was:

> *Oh, what is it that I do? When I am in class, students know. I give them a different kind of advice and the 'Thought of the Day'. I always write a Thought of the Day, like for today I told them that to be a champion you must believe you are the best, if you are not, pretend you are. And I have explained to them what does this mean (sic) and the school as a whole knows me as a leader because I am. Let's say I deserve to be a leader because of the way that I present myself to people and the way I speak, I speak nicely to people, I am able to respond to people's problems. If someone comes with a problem I am able to handle it well.*

An implication carried by the above is that for leadership to result in school cultures that are potentially enabling for HDATSS, the first step is to enable leadership to emerge organically from the ground. Potentially enabling about such emergence are the schools' complexities resulting from their perpetually transforming natures. These mean that leadership appropriateness for the schools cannot easily be bureaucratically determined, but can only be appropriate if given a chance to emerge organically.

Leadership formalisation

Despite the enormous enabling capacity of a leadership that emerges informally for HDATSS, such a leadership was deduced not to be sufficient for influencing the formation of school cultures that stand to benefit the schools' academic performance. Lacking in the leadership is its lack of formal standing. This stands to deprive the leadership of opportunities for further development and concerted efforts. While some of the individuals perceived as influential at Fundiseka were not in official positions, several of the individuals *were* in such a position. The latter made it possible for the school to channel and develop the emerging leadership potential to the benefit of the school's academic performance. The numerous structures and processes the school had in place, as presented in Chapters 4 and 6, helped facilitate this. Also pointing to the enabling capacity of such a leadership practice for the formation of school cultures associated with good academic performance in HDATSS was its absence at Umzamo.

Occupancy

The reason Fundiseka was able to develop its leadership potential was the informal but organic emergence of leadership accompanied by the provisioning of platforms from which the leadership could exercise its influence formally. Examples of such platforms included numerous student and staff committees at the school. The school's RCL and its sub-committees provided one example of platforms that enabled student leadership to formally exercise its influence on student attitudes and actions. One such committee was the 'Peer Counselors' RCL sub-committee which offered student leadership with a formal platform for exercising its influence by comforting fellow

students in need of emotional support. Enabling about such support was that it provided the 'needy' students with an enabling support tool that helped the affected students focus on academic performance. The sub-committee further utilised its position to alert staff on student situations needing special attention and/or assistance. This had teachers helping students handle situations that threatened to interfere with their academic performance. Also pointing to the enabling leadership capacity of the team were students who were observed to be continually visiting the office of the lady teacher that coordinated the activities of the committee at break. Also alluding to the success of the team were the happy and lively demeanors of the majority of the schools' student body, as is apparent in the expressions of students posing with their class teacher in Picture 6. below.

The features described above are contrary to the lacklustre practices displayed by the Umzamo student body whose school culture denied the students of such opportunities. The failure of Umzamo to provide similar leadership opportunities had exposed the school to misdirected and counterproductive influences accruing from frustrated leadership potential. Alluding to this were the destructive unrests experienced by the school in preceding years, one of which resulted in the school principal's three year displacement.

Contrary to this, Fundiseka not only provided ample opportunities for leadership occupancy to its student body but also did the same for its teaching staff. In addition to being class teachers, staff also coordinated activities at the school. Further pointing to the opportunities were numerous leadership duties delegated to all SMT members. All the members were, for example, given opportunities to lead discussions on various issues during SMT meetings.

Development

Development

Also potentially enabling about the formalization of leadership that emerged organically is that it provides the schools' leadership pool with opportunities for further development. The importance of such development was deduced to reside in its potential to further strengthen the leadership and overcome whatever weaknesses it might possess. This was found to be particularly the case at Fundiseka where the school utilised numerous strategies for developing its formal leadership. In addition to providing the development through participation in school committees. Fundiseka also encouraged and allowed staff and students in official positions of leadership to attend numerous leadership development workshops provided by other organisations. One such workshop was organised by the provincial Department of Education for RCL team members and teacher liaison officers at the beginning of 2003. While the Fundiseka representatives that attended the workshop were *bona fide* RCL members. Umzamo's. as described in Chapter 5. were hurriedly assembled for the purpose. This was because the school did not at that time have an RCL or a teacher liaison officer. As a result. the Fundiseka team had during interviews claimed to have benefited from the workshop and to be utilizing the benefits to the school's academic advantage. On the other hand, such claims could not be made by the Umzamo representatives seeing that they lacked a forum from which they could utilize the skills.

Channeling

Another leadership implication regarding the formation of leadership that is most likely to enable supportive school cultures in HDATSS is that the leadership needs to be aligned with the school's priorities. as was case at Fundiseka. but not at Umzamo. Forming part of the Fundiseka leadership channeling were issues such as equity, inclusion and extra-mural activities. An example of such channeling was the RCL workshop conducted for class representatives by the teacher liaison officer and his deputy prior to elections into RCL portfolios by fellow members. The teachers began the workshop by explaining to the representatives what each RCL sub-committee involved and then went on to give pointers of suitable qualities for each portfolio. In addition. the teachers had requested the representative to decide on whether to maintain all of the existing sub-committees and to propose and motivate for new ones if need be. This activity not only helped ensure the formation/maintenance of

appropriate sub-committees but also helped ensure the election of suitable candidates into RCL sub-committees.

Also assisting with the leadership channeling was that each RCL committee functioned under the guidance of a teacher coordinator. Furthermore, the committees implemented their decisions only after they had been discussed with the principal and the SMT. For example, the decision to convert the room originally intended as a kitchen for the technical wing of the school into RCL offices was first discussed with the principal who then consulted the SMT and the teachers teaching in this wing.

LEADERSHIP FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH ENABLING SCHOOL CULTURES IN HDATSS

In addition to deductions on the role of school cultures for the formation of leadership that has the potential of enabling the formation of supportive school cultures, deductions were also made about features that characterize such a leadership. A deduction drawn from findings on the leadership of the two sample schools was that a leadership that is potentially enabling for organizations as complex and multi-faceted as are most HDATSS needs to be equally complex and multi-faceted. This was found to be the case at Fundiseka but not at Umzamo. Features found to constitute the enabling Fundiseka leadership complexity and multi-faceted nature, and deduced to be equally potentially enabling for other HDATSS, included:

- an integrating nature;
- service; and
- diversified leadership.

Integrating leadership

As pointed out in the previous chapter, fundamentally enabling about the Fundiseka school culture were common understandings, while what was basically disabling about Umzamo's were ambiguous and fragmented understandings. This finding

prompted a literature search for factors contributing to common understandings in schools. Views on the matter were found to be contradictory. For pioneer scholars on the subject such as Tonnies (in Bauman, 2001) common understandings among community members are 'given' and tacit, and therefore could not be said to involve 'consensus'. According to these authors this is because common understandings only occur in like-minded group members. What this means is that true communities have no motivation towards consensus considering that consensus is 'an agreement reached by essentially differently minded people, a product of hard negotiations and compromise, a lot of bickering, much contrariness, and occasional fisticuffs' (Bauman, 2000: 12). The claim is that:

> ... the community-style, matter of fact (zuhanden, as Martin Heidegger would say) understanding does not need to be sought, let alone laboriously built or fought for: that understanding 'is there', ready made and ready to use – so that we understand each other 'without words' and never need to ask, apprehensively, 'what do you mean'?. The kind of understanding on which community rests precedes all agreements and understandings. Such understanding is not a finishing line, but the starting point of all togetherness. It is a 'reciprocal, binding sentiment' – 'the proper and real will of those bound together': and it is thanks to such understanding, and such understanding only, that in community people 'remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors' (ibid: 10).

Contrary to the above assumption, common understandings at Fundiseka were found to be definitely a result of negotiated consensus. An explanation for this contrariness, as offered by ensuing scholarships, is that while tacit communal understandings might have been the case for pre-modern communities, this cannot still be the case for the complex and ever transforming modern communities. These scholars' claim is that the word 'community' was in the past actually used indiscriminately, emptily, and in a sense that was hard to find in real life (see, for example, Hobsbawn in Bauman, 2001:14). Their view is that, in addition, the diversity that came along with modern movements of people from one area to another meant that the indiscriminate 'community' concept is either disappearing or that its 'natural' conceptualization has to be reviewed. The ever-changing realities mean that communities such as HDATSS can no longer tacitly establish and sustain common understandings through proximity

and/or traditions. Instead, enabling such common understandings for the communities would be conscious, explicit and protracted negotiated consensus. Of advantage with respect to such negotiations is that they result in agreements which, if obeyed daily, become habits which no longer need 'to be thought about, let alone monitored and policed' (Bauman, 2001: 11).

The implications of the above, together with the sample schools' leadership, is that leadership is imperative if common understandings are to characterise communities as complex as HDATSS. Also implied by the above is that the leadership must be integrating if it is to influence the formation of common understandings. This deduction resulted from the existence of such a feature in the enabling Fundiseka leadership but not in the disabling Umzamo 'leadership'. The question that this posed was: what leadership attributes are necessary if the leadership is to enable negotiations that result in integrating consensus in HDATSS? International leadership literature has for some time been hinting at 'diffused' leadership as one such feature. However, the literature has not been very helpful in providing information on how the diffusion can be accomplished in all contexts, let alone in HDATSS. Findings on the sample schools' leadership went a long way towards helping develop a better understanding into the subject, particularly in relationship to HDATSS. An examination of the profound differences between the 'leadership' of the sample schools revealed that such influence is potentially achievable if the leadership is:

- accessible to all; and
- collective;

Leadership accessibility

Accessibility to positions of leadership was made possible to all of the Fundiseka community by the large 'size' of the school's leadership, as intimated by the number of individuals listed as influencing the school community's attitudes and actions in the questionnaire administered for identifying the school's leadership. A factor that contributed to this size was the school's practice of enabling leadership to emerge informally and organically followed by provisioning of formal forums from which the leadership could then exercise its influence.

Also alluding to leadership accessibility at Fundiseka was that the list of influential individuals compiled from the leadership identifying questionnaire appeared in two clusters. While the few names appearing in the top cluster were 'nominated' by the majority of respondents, the names listed in the bottom cluster had collected rather few nominations. That the nominations had not tapered down but instead were in two clusters was initially puzzling. However, a closer examination and continuing data collection revealed that the clusters were actually an intimation of diffused leadership. The names at the bottom of the lists were mostly from specific classes and were mostly either of class or subject teachers of small classes, as had been the case with natural science teachers. The deduction drawn from this was that almost all of the teachers at the school were viewed as influential by almost all of the students with whom they came into contact. Deduced from the differences in the number of the nominations was that the teachers that collected the majority of nominations owed this to influence exercised both in and outside the classroom in activities such as morning assembly and other extramural activities. On the other hand, the leadership that collected fewer nominations pointed to a leadership that was confined to the classroom.

A deduction drawn from this was that influence effectiveness in HDATSS is not necessarily linked to the size of 'followership' but to the degree to which particular individuals are perceived as influential by individuals with whom they come into contact. An implication that emerges from this is that HDATSS need to treat all their members, particularly the teachers, as potential leaders. An explanation for this is that while for traditional communities the integrating powers may have resided in individuals *de jure* this cannot be the case for current communities as massive and aesthetic as are the HDATSS. Bauman's (2001) claim is that such a power for the communities *resides* in individuals *de facto*. His explanation for this claim is that:

> ... guidance is these days aesthetically, rather than ethically, operated. Its principal vehicle is no longer the authority of leaders with their visions, or moral preachers with their homilies, but the example of 'celebrities in view' (celebrities because of being in view); neither the sanctions attached nor their scattered yet rough power of enforcement is its weapon. Like all objects of aesthetic experience, the guidance insinuated by the entertainment industry acts through seduction. There are no

> sanctions against those who fall out of the ranks and refuse to pay attention – apart from their own horror of missing an experience which others (so many others!) relish and enjoy.
> (Bauman. 2001: 66)

What this means is that leadership can only be effective in integrating large masses populating HDATSS if it is constantly visible to the masses. The large size of the schools and the multiple commitments that often take principals out of the schools' premises mean the principals are hardly in view of the masses populating these schools. This deprives the schools of the traditional form of all embracing leadership on the part of school principals and necessitates diffused leadership. Recent literature has actually been pointing out to the impossibility of effectiveness for school leadership that rests on principals alone (Waite, 2002).

Further conveying leadership diffusion at Fundiseka was that all the school community interviewed for the study conveyed familiarity with, and acceptance of, influence by individuals nominated as most influential by the majority of the school's community. Conveying this was that the individuals not only readily provided descriptions of the perceived leaders, but also all provided similar descriptions of the individuals' leadership. The opposite occurred at Umzamo where even though the leadership identification questionnaire had listed numerous individuals perceived as influential at the school, interview respondents had struggled with providing descriptions of the so-called influential individuals. Furthermore, where descriptions were offered, they differed from one another, giving the impression that the responses were either concocted or that they were about individuals whose influence was rarely experienced.

Collectivity

Further enabling about leadership at Fundiseka was its uniformity. Numerous structures and committees helped bring about uniformity by providing the leadership with opportunities for reflection on common issues such as the school's purpose/s and expectations. An example that pointed to such collectivity was that all resolutions by the school's committees first had to go through the school's bureaucracy before being

implemented, as had been the case with the issue of the debating forum in collaboration with neighbouring schools as discussed above.

On the other hand, one other reason why Umzamo' leadership' was unable to be integrative was that the school hardly had forums from which the leadership could reach common understandings. Furthermore, even where the school did have forums, the forums seemed to be either dysfunctional or fragmented. The proceedings of the athletics event at the beginning of 2003 over which the principal had shown displeasure provided a good illustration of the leadership's fragmented nature. The misunderstandings had arisen because the principal claimed he had not been informed about the day's proposed schedule, while the sport's master and his team maintained they had discussed the matter with the principal. Resulting in the confusion was a claimed assumption by the principal that the day of the event would begin with classes. What was confusing to the team about the claim was that the expectation had not been conveyed to them and that the scheduling had not been any different from that of previous years.

Service

Service was one other feature deduced to promise the enablement of the formation of school cultures that support good academic performance in HDATSS. This deduction was contrary to established leadership postulates that leadership resides in power over others. However, for individuals insisting on the 'power' attribute for leadership what could then be said is that Fundiseka leadership owed its 'power' to influence others on its *service* rather than on issues such as manipulation, control or coercion. Pointing to the potential 'power' of service for shaping enabling school cultures in HDATSS was the value the school community placed on services provided by the Fundiseka leadership. The absence of such services at Umzamo confirmed the attribute's enabling capacity for the academic performance of HDATSS. Interviewee responses that conveyed the value the Fundiseka community attached to the services included:

> ***Student:*** *Another thing is that here at school there are organizations, groups that deal with learners' problems. For example, people who get abused at home, they try to help them...*

> ***Student leader:*** *I think we are all trying because if a student is having problems I will help him if I can...*
> ***Teacher:*** *Mrs Z. usually tells the young people how to behave, to take care of themselves, telling them about AIDS. They must be aware that there is AIDS. They must not discriminate the one who have HIV-AIDS.*

The services that were found to be offering Fundiseka leadership with influential capacity included:

- nurture;
- support;
- information provisioning;
- direction provisioning;
- physical security; and
- problem solving.

Nurturing

Numerous issues and interview responses at Fundiseka indicated that both the school's leadership and 'followership' attached great importance to nurturing. The school's practice of developing the capacity of identified leadership potential provided just one example of the school's nurturing service. Also reflecting the nurturing was the school's choice of 'external' community members it occasionally invited to lead morning assembly. One such group had its leaders beginning the assembly proceedings with the following comments:

> *Siyajabula ukuba naninamhlanje. Okusijabulisa kakhulu ukubona ukuhlonipha kwenu. Akenizishayele izandla. (We are happy to be with you today. What makes us especially happy is the respect you've shown us. Give yourselves a round of applause)* – after which the students good humouredly clapped their hands and whistled with joy.

The members of the group then took turns presenting motivational speeches to the students. This was contrary to a similar situation observed at Umzamo where a pastor leading the assembly had focused solely on scriptures pointing to sinful behaviour by

youth and on 'condemning' students participating in such behavior. That the motivational speeches presented at Fundiseka were valued by the students was apparent from the students' attentive gazes. The contrary was observed to be the case at Umzamo where a number of students had shown signs of amusement at the pastor's sermon by giggling throughout his presentation.

Information provisioning

Another service provided by Fundiseka leadership deduced to be providing it with influential capacity was that of keeping the school community well informed on numerous matters of interest. What made this possible was that most of the teachers the school community nominated as being highly influential at the school also held prominent positions in popular teacher unions. This enabled these teachers to exercise their influence by consistently keeping the schools' teaching corps informed about labour- related developments. Meetings convened for such purposes provided the school's leadership with a platform not only for providing the service but also for displaying capacities to influence other's attitudes and actions. That the provisioning of information held influential capacity was conveyed by the positioning of the union leaders in the list of influential people at the school, as was the case with the young male teacher nominated as the most influential individual at the Fundiseka. Information provisioning was of value not only to teaching staff at Fundiseka but also to the school's students, as conveyed in numerous visits to the staffroom during breaks by students who were in search of 'extra lessons'.

Conveying the enabling power of this service was that while at Fundiseka, discussions in such meetings were confined to information provisioning and 'positive' influence. At Umzamo, the meetings seemed to provide participants with forums for challenging certain issues at the school. One such occurrence was when the school principal objected to a practice by certain teachers of chatting over protracted periods with students at break. This had been voiced as a follow-up on a reading of labour stipulations which prohibited 'relationships' between teachers and students.

An explanation of the enabling potentiality of the service for other HDATSS is historical deprivation of the schools' communities of information in general and in particular that which relates to academic performance.

Direction provisioning

Also particularly enabling about Fundiseka leadership was its ability to give direction on various issues. Providing examples for this service were teachers who at morning assembly would remind students of various school rules or read class rules during lessons when occasions called for this. The absence of this feature in Umzamo leadership helped confirm its influential power for other HDATSSs. Contrary to the practice by Fundiseka leadership of providing direction to students at assembly, the Umzamo principal often concentrated on pointing out what the school was not about. At no time during the fieldwork was the principal informing the students what the school was actually about. His favorite phrase was:

This school is not a halfway house for students who have nothing else to do!

Problem solving

Also deduced as having the capacity of arming leadership in HDATSS with influential 'power' was problem solving ability. This was found to be the case with Fundiseka leadership whose ability and preparedness to solve problems facing the school community from time to time had been stated by all interviewees as one of the features valued in the school's leadership. Most of the people that the community had nominated as being most influential at the school were also said to be in possession of such a capacity. These individuals included the principal, the lady teacher who coordinated peer counseling and the young male teacher who received the most votes. Numerous responses quoted in Chapter 4 offer examples of the degree to which this service was available and appreciated by the school. Confirming the power of this service for HDATSS was its absence at Umzamo, as pointed out in Chapter 5.

Support

Also deduced as forming part of services that have the potential of enabling supportive cultures in HDATSS is that of providing emotional, academic, physical

and economic support to those in need. This was found to be the case with Fundiseka leadership but not with that of Umzamo. One event that served to illustrate such support occurred during an observation of a class taught by one of the young teachers who was amongst those nominated as 'fairly influential' individuals at the school. Below is an extract from field notes on the incident:

> (Mr G. asks the class about the whereabouts of a student that has been absent from school for over a week. The class informs him that the student is said to be critically ill to which Mr G. requests directions to the student's home. At break Mr G requests another teacher to accompany him to the student's home).

Also pointing to the influential capacity of support for the Fundiseka community were reasons given by almost all of the interview respondents on why certain individuals were perceived as leaders at the school. The only time this form of service was mentioned at Umzamo was in relation to the female teacher who taught the "Life Orientation' learning area. The potential of this support to be enabling for leadership in HDATSS is understandable considering that the academic life of quite a number of students often gets disrupted by issues that point to emotional and financial needs.

Security

One other service provided by Fundiseka leadership to the school community and which proved to be valued by the school's community related to security. For example, as pointed out in Chapter 4, the leadership had done all it could to prevent entry into the school premises by individuals who posed threat to the school community's safety. In addition to the two guards employed at the school, a group of male teachers were in the habit of spending their breaks in the school yard under a tree in full view of the gates. That this leadership service was of value to the school community and of potential value to other HDATSS is also understandable taking into consideration that the schools are often disrupted by criminal interferences by outsiders, as is often reported in the media.

Diversified leadership

Also potentially enabling about leadership in HDATSS is leadership diversity. That the diversity is potentially enabling for HDATSS was demonstrated not only by its presence in Fundiseka leadership, but also by its absence in Umzamo leadership. Enabling the diversity in Fundiseka leadership was the school practice of enabling leadership to emergence organically from the ground. On the other hand, obstructing the diversity at Umzamo was the school's practice of discouraging the emergence of organic leadership. Potentially enabling about the diversity for other HDATSS is the diversity of the schools' populations. As a result of the organic emergence, Fundiseka's leadership displayed forms of leadership that corresponded to various orientations and needs of different sectors of the school's community. Identified constituents of Fundiseka leadership diversity included:

- charismatic leadership;
- transformational leadership;
- transactional leadership;
- situational leadership;
- democratic leadership;
- occasional autocracy;
- relationship-oriented leadership; and
- task-oriented leadership.

Charismatic leadership

Found to be particularly contributing to the influential capacity of the young male teacher that received the highest nominations for influential individuals at Fundiseka was his charisma. Conveying the teacher's charisma, among other things, was the articulate and persuasive manner in which he expressed the aims and rules of the school at opportune moments, such as morning assembly or when articulating problems needing the school community's attention during staff meetings. Such charisma helped bring about solidarity among the members of the school in a somewhat dramatic and emotive way that Ferrinho (1980) maintains typifies charismatic leadership.

Also constituting the teacher's charisma was that although the teacher was adept at defining problems for the school community, he personally did not develop solutions to the problems. This is, according to Ferrhino (1980), one other characteristic of charismatic leadership. After articulating the problems to and for the school community the teacher would then seek out and very effectively influence those he thought were best suited to helping find solutions to the problem. Exemplifying such a tendency was the teacher's involvement in the resolution of the tension that had threatened teacher cohesion following the announcement by one of the DPs at assembly that students must report teachers who 'bunked' classes. When this young teacher sensed the threat he immediately set about bringing together a group of teachers he trusted would be able to handle the matter with success. The group then approached the DP and were able to convince him to alter his stance and apologise to staff for the remark.

Transformational leadership

A number of individuals, particularly the principal, constituting Fundiseka's leadership displayed characteristics of transformational leadership. Also showing signs of this form of leadership was the Sports Master who, together with one of DPs, was nominated as the second most influential individual at the school. Alluding to the appropriateness of this form of leadership for Fundiseka were not only interview responses pointing to it in the principal but also the degree to which it was valued by the respondents. This was despite the principal being nominated the third most influential individual at the school. This gave the impression that certain sectors of the school community were not happy with his leadership An explanation of the principal's ranking possibly resided in a 'deficiency' of what Bauman (2001) describes as aesthetic influence. What this means is that the names that had readily come into mind for the majority of individuals responding to the questionnaire identifying influential individuals were those of individuals observed most frequently at the school. The principal could not have been such an individual considering that he did not coordinate activities that would regularly bring him into contact with the school's masses. For example, the principal did not make announcements at morning assembly on a daily basis but shared the responsibility with other SMT members and

whoever else needed to make announcements for whatever reason. Also, the principal was often out of the school premises attending principals' meetings and workshops.

However, interviews with individuals who, for one reason or another, made contact with the principal indicated that the principal's form of leadership was perhaps the most valued at the school. The responses located the strength of the principal's leadership in his concern for the good of the school rather than his own self. This saw him converting others into adopting a similar concern. That the principal was more concerned with the good of the school than with self was evident in, for example, his practice of involving others in decision making during which he would show genuine regard for their inputs. The principal displayed this predisposition in all meetings attended during the field-work.

Transactional leadership

While the greater portion of Fundiseka leadership showed characteristics of transformational forms, a section of the leadership showed signs of being decidedly transactional. Conveying this form of leadership included the school community's practice of name-calling newcomers, particularly the Grade 8 class. The message conveyed to the newcomers by the name-calling was: 'tow the line or else you will continue to be called such stupid names'. The practice worked for the school community by helping bring about conformity by newcomers to the school's established behavioural norms. Interview responses conveying the power of this form of 'transaction' to help bring about desired behaviour included:

> ***Student 1:*** *The way they (other students) speak to these students shows that they don't respect them, they speak to them anyhow and call them names, e.g. 'Mafikizolo' (Jimmy come lately – literal translation is 'yesterday's arrivals')*
> ***Student 2:*** *It used to upset me, but then I realized that I was new and had to look to others to see how things were done. I do the same to those who have come after me, but I tell them that the same happened to me.*

Other incidents that conveyed transactional leadership included a practice by two teachers observed offering sweets for good performance in the Grade 8 classes and the school's practice of honouring student achievements at morning assembly and

Prize-Giving Days. Transactional about the latter was a promise of 'glory' and 'belonging' in exchange of 'excellence'.

Contingency leadership

Contingency leadership was one other form of leadership deduced to promise the formation of enabling school cultures in HDATSS. The effectiveness of the school's leadership diversity pointed to the capacity. What the diversity was pointing to was that different portions of the schools require different forms of leadership. In addition, pointing to contingency was a practice by a portion of influential individuals at Fundiseka of changing their forms of leadership as situations demanded. This was the case with the DP I shadowed for a day. While the DP's behaviour in the Grade 12 class had displayed urgency, his behaviour was more relaxed with the lower classes, particularly with the Grade 8s. The DP had been very firm in the Grade 12 class and sternly critical of work that did not meet his expectations, but had been very relaxed with the Grade 8 class over the same issues. He had been so relaxed with the latter that he even passed a few jokes with the class and addressed students responding to his questions by pet names such as 'mam'ncane's (little mum's) answer is correct' for girls. The different approaches appeared to work. His sternness had not been off-putting to the Grade 12 students, many of whom had followed him after class to seek clarification on aspects of work not mastered during class. On the other hand, the relaxed manner with the Grade 8 class was not found to breed familiarity but instead had conveyed an acceptance that made it easy for the newcomers to participate in his lesson.

Participatory leadership

This form of leadership is one other leadership attribute deduced to promise the formation of school cultures that enable good academic performance in HDATSS. Alluding to this was the widespread form of such leadership at Fundiseka while Umzamo leadership practice had pointed to contrived participatory leadership. Pointing to the latter were complaints by certain participants at the school that not all decisions taken in meetings were followed through by people in formal positions of authority. For the respondents this smacked of related prior or post meeting decision making. The Fundiseka practice was found to be clarifying and empowering for

Fundiseka while Umzamo's was perceived to contribute to fragmentation, as conveyed by the following responses:

> ***Fundiseka teacher:*** *I think that the decisions, because we have many departments, although the principal may have the final say, the main motivations come from the departments.*
>
> ***Umzamo HoD:*** *We are still very poor there. We do make decisions as a group, that is the teachers and the SMT. But what I have noticed is that most of them they come from top down, instead of coming from the teachers, from the ground and then up.*

Occasional autocracy

One other leadership attribute that contributed to leadership diversity at Fundiseka was the tendency of being autocratic when deemed necessary and appropriate. Striking about the Fundiseka leadership of combining participatory and autocratic elements was that the practice did not bother the school community. An explanation given by the group of influential teachers that participated in the 'findings workshop' was that this was because the school community trusted the principal. Furthermore, the group maintained that the community's lack of concern lay in the knowledge that the principal welcomed its inputs whenever it showed dissatisfaction with particular decisions the principal had taken unilaterally. The following response by one of the school's HoDs is one of the responses that conveyed this feeling

> *Decisions are taken with consensus with regard to management... Sometimes it is not really possible to get consensus all the time. Some decisions have to be taken on the spur of the moment. The principal, the person who is in charge and in authority takes decisions. But the decisions that need to be taken via consensus is done via consensus.*

Relationship-orientation

Also constituting leadership diversity at Fundiseka was a relationship-orientation. This was particularly the case with the principal, the female teacher who coordinated the activities of the RCL Peer Counselors' team, the sports organizer voted as the second most influential individual person at the school, and the charismatic young male teacher nominated as the most influential teacher at the school. One of the

incidents that related to the principal's relationship orientation was narrated by the group that participated in the findings workshop. The incident regarded an unnamed offense by an unnamed staff member that had made the SMT extremely angry and demanding strong action against the teacher. The group stated that the manner in which the principal had handled the meeting convened for the matter had the teacher realizing his fault, apologizing to the team for his misbehaviour, and promising to mend his ways. The group stated that the principal's handling of the issue had initially been shocking to them considering their state of anger at the time but had ended up impressing them in view of its consequences. According to the group the way in which the matter was handled not only had the teacher mending his ways, but also mended relations between him and the rest of the staff.

Task-orientation

While maintaining good relations among the school community seemed to be the leadership form of choice for Fundiseka leadership, some of the influential individuals, particularly one of the DP, were decidedly task-oriented. That the deputy principal had been listed as the second most influential teacher by both teachers and students indicated that his task orientation was valued by most of the school community. An example of the DP's task-orientation included the occasion on which he had instructed students at morning assembly to report teachers who bunked classes. Also conveying the deputy principal's task orientation were his regular rounds during classes. Also serving to highlight his task-orientation was his comment during an informal conversation that one of his priorities was to make sure that the school's academic performance was on par with that of historically advantaged schools. His claim was that he failed to find justification for sending children, including his own, to 'Model Cs' when all teachers at the school had academic and professional qualifications that qualified them to teach the subjects at the levels they taught. His view was that all what was needed was for the senior management team to ensure that all staff undertook their work diligently.

ENABLING LEADERSHIP RECONCEPTUALISATION

Findings in this study were that the degree to which leadership at the two sample schools was effective in enabling cultures that supported academic performance depended to a very large extent on how the schools conceptualised leadership. An implication that emerges from this is that HDATSS need to conceptualise leadership in a manner that enables the formation of leadership that is associated with school cultures that support academic performance in HDATSS.

The term 'leadership' has been with us since time immemorial. Its conceptual lineage is hierarchical and accrues from small informal communities and small single faceted formal organizations. The transfer of such conceptualisation onto currently large, complex and multifaceted organizations, such as HDATSS, is not likely to herald effectiveness, as was the case at Umzamo. While Umzamo viewed leadership as an activity linked to official positions of authority, Fundiseka linked it to the ability to influence the behaviour of others. Pointing to this is that all individuals possessing capacity to exercise influence had been enabled by the Fundiseka community to do so, while the opposite had been true at Umzamo. This made it possible for Fundiseka to identify, develop and collaborate with emerging leadership in a way that enabled the leadership to reach all school members and influence their activities associated with academic performance in a concerted manner. What this means is that the school did not only have the type of leadership that was appropriate to its needs, but that it also had a leadership large enough for the needs. Contrary to this, Umzamo's fragmented leadership had parts of the school population listing individuals it perceived as influential only to find that the listed individuals were denied opportunities to influence others' attitudes and actions to the benefit of the school's academic performance.

CONCLUSION

Deductions drawn from the findings in this study are that the starting point for leadership that promises to enable the formation of school cultures that support good academic performance in HDATSS are school cultures that enable the emergence of

'appropriate' leadership. Such cultures enable the organic emergence of leadership, develop the capacity of emerging leadership and then proceed to provide concerted direction to the leadership. What was further deduced to be potentially enabling about such cultures is that they are highly likely to result in a leadership that corresponds to the schools' leadership needs.

What was also deduced from the findings was that for leadership to be effective in enabling cultures that support good academic performances in HDATSS, the leadership needs to be as complex and multi-faceted as the schools' populations. Further deduced from the findings was that for the leadership to be enabling it needs to be of service to the schools' populations and that the most enabling service is one that complements the populations' historical deprivations. Such deprivations include divisiveness; inappropriate attitudes; inadequate information, lack of nurturing, and lack of emotional support and financial resources.

Also deduced from the findings was that a form of leadership that promises to be enabling to school cultures that support good academic performances in HDATSS is one underpinned by enabling conceptualization. Such conceptualization views leadership fundamentally as influence rather than a bureaucratic preserve. Very likely to result from such conceptualization is the enablement of leadership forms that are appropriate to the schools' needs in terms of size, direction, diversity and historically determined needs.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter begins with a summary of explorations conducted within this study for the purpose of developing better understanding of leadership implications for the formation of school cultures associated with good academic performance in HDATSS. This is followed by a presentation of conclusions, and the theory, that emerged from gathered data. The last section is on recommendations emerging from the conclusions for policy, practice and further research relating to the improvement of academic performance in HDATSS.

THE SUMMARY

This study was prompted by a desire to contribute to efforts aimed at improving academic performance in HDATSS. The desire was prompted by a perception that recent efforts have not had the desired outcomes. This is despite numerous policies formulated by the new government and its departments of education in this respect since 1994. The policies were a reflection of a major concern by the government for a national transformation it hoped to achieve basically through formal education. This placed the improvement of academic performance of historically disadvantaged schools in the government's priority list. Conveying this was, among other things, the formulation of programmes such as COLTS soon after the government's ascendancy. At the forefront of the policies was an assumption that of major historical disadvantage for the schools were inadequate material and human resources. Indicating this was the department's activities aimed at improving the schools' resources so they would be on par with those of historically advantaged schools.

While the policies may have helped attain the desired outcomes in some of the schools, widespread poor performances in standardized academic tests and examinations indicate the opposite in the majority of the schools. The view was that the failure implied gaps that needed filling if the desired improvements were to be

achieved. One identified such gap was the scant attention paid to the relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership at the schools. In studying this relationship, the aim was to identify and develop better understanding of school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performances in HDATSS and in so doing develop better understanding of school leadership implications for the formation of such school cultures.

The assumption that the relationship was crucial for good academic performance was influenced by findings of numerous studies that linked organizational/school effectiveness, including academic excellence, to enabling organizational/school cultures. While the studies offer lists of features that characterise school cultures of academically productive schools, none of the studies have been providing information that informs practice aimed at the formation of such school cultures in HDATSS. This awareness resulted in a decision that this study be conducted in a manner that would build on the good 'snapshots' of enabling school cultures provided by preceding studies. To achieve this, the study was conducted by means of an ethnographic methodology. The advantage of this methodology was seen to be in the methodology's ability to provide 'thick/micro description' and a theory grounded on gathered data. The conviction was that emergent findings from such a methodology would help feed into practice aimed at the formation of similar cultures at the schools.

CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusion drawn from findings in this study was that a definite relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership exists in HDATSS. Pointing to this was that even though the sample schools were similar in all, or almost all, aspects, this was not the case regarding academic performance and related school cultures and forms of school leadership. Similar about the schools were, for example, their physical location; the socio-economic backgrounds of their 'clientele'; the quantity and quality of material and human resources supplied by the Department of Education; and teacher: student ratio. However, despite these similarities Fundiseka's academic performance, as measured by matriculation pass rates, was decidedly and consistently superior to that of Umzamo. Furthermore, while

Fundiseka's school culture induced positive feelings from the school's community thus enabling it to engage in activities that supported its academic performance, this was not the case at Umzamo. The latter school's culture was, instead, found to induce negative feelings in its population which then disabled the school population's activities related to academic performance. Further pointing to the relationship between the three concepts of central focus in this study was that the differences in the schools' academic performance and cultures were associated with opposite forms of leadership.

Principles and emergent theory on school cultures associated with good academic performance in HDATSS

A basic conclusion drawn from findings in this study was that school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS are those that are integrating and empowering. Such cultures were concluded to be those that are predominantly communal in nature but also incorporate supplementary societal features to make up for shortcomings of communality for societies as modern as are HDATSS. Also concluded, was that such cultures are those that supplement and reflect the cultural backgrounds of individuals populating the schools.

Communality

Found to be potentially enabling for HDATSS about communality were common understandings regarding the schools' aspirations and behavioural expectations. Resulting from such common understandings and therefore potentially enabling to the schools' academic performance was enthusiasm and empowerment brought about by:

- Integrated focus
- Belonging and cohesion
- Respect for human dignity and property
- Trust
- Interdependence
- Security.

Societal incorporation

While the advantage of communality for academic performance in HDATSS' lies in the good feelings embedded in such a culture, this form of culture lacks the organizational practicality demanded by modern day organizations such as HDATSS. Traditionally, communality developed over a protracted time in a covert and implicit manner, a 'luxury' that schools, particularly the HDATSS, hardly have at their disposal. Depriving HDATSS of such a 'luxury' are their forever changing compositions resulting from perpetual movements by students from one place of residence to another. Also depriving the schools of the enculturation time is that most of the schools' time is spent on filling academic potholes brought about by historical disadvantage. Furthermore, the current educational changes find teachers spending inordinately large amounts of time attending 'updating' workshops. This reduces contact with students that would otherwise help with the enculturation. All of these mean that the schools need to make use of more robust means in order to bring about common understandings among its members on the schools' behavioural expectations and related values, beliefs and assumptions.

The importance of incorporating societal features into communality in order to help enable good academic performance in HDATSS therefore stands to supplement the shortcomings of communality for familiarising the schools' members with the school's desired communality. Below is a brief summary of what was concluded to be potentially enabling about the societal incorporation:

- Ownership resulting from negotiated goal setting, communication and clarification;
- individuality, equity and diversity resulting from negotiated participation, all of which are imperative for modern day demands but denied to members of traditional communities.

Context reflection and engagement

In addition to the advantage of the above communo-societal school culture combination for the academic performance of HDATSS, also concluded was that for

school cultures to be enabling, they need to both reflect the populations' cultural backgrounds and engage with issues that are potentially disabling in the backgrounds.

Context engagement

Issues concluded to be potentially disabling for HDATSS and with which the schools need to engage to help overcome the issues' potentially disabling effects on the schools' academic performance include:

- provisioning of emotional support for member disturbances resulting from issues such as emotional and physical abuse brought about by historical deprivations;
- provisioning of economic support, for example, through fund raising for the purchase of scarce educational materials and assistance to the very needy in terms of money, clothing, and/or food;
- promotion of respect for differing political affiliations and a focus on highlighting collective subservience/affiliation to the school; and
- arranging the school day in such a manner that students may be able to participate in extramural activities denied to them by safety precautions and after school responsibilities. This not only increases the number of students that stand to benefit from educationally from the extra-mural activities but also helps academic performance by brightening the school days for the students.

Context reflection

Two features concluded to be reflective of the backgrounds of the great majority of individuals populating HDATSS and with which the individuals are familiar and at ease and which, therefore, promise to be enthusing and invigorating for the individuals were:

- verve; and
- Ubuntu.

A theory that emerges from the cultural features discussed above is that school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS

are those that reflect negotiated communal ownership and that this potentiality resides in cultures that:

- bring about good feelings among the schools' members. For the schools such feelings include integration, senses of belonging, and shared identity, all of which reside in communality;
- bring about common understandings of organizational goals and behavioural norms by incorporating societal organizational features such as negotiated or participatory decision making;
- bring about empowerment in forms of individuality, equity and diversity through the negotiated decisions;
- engage or supplement historical economic, emotional and social deprivations;
- reflect the cultural backgrounds of the schools' populations; and
- incorporate a leadership that negotiates the above.

Leadership implications for school cultures associated with good academic performance in HDATSS

Conclusions drawn from findings on the leadership associated with school cultures comprising the above features are that bringing about this association is leadership that:

- is integrating and that such integration is enabled by collective leadership diffusion in terms of size, appropriateness and direction/purpose;
- engages in negotiations that help bring about common understandings and ownership;
- is serving by supplementing historical deprivation in issues such as information, security and emotional and economic well-being;
- is ratified by the schools' members and that the ratification is most likely to occur if the leadership emerges organically from within the schools' masses;

- is diversified in terms of approaches and types in alignment with the diverse needs of the schools' populations. Examples of approaches and types that stand to be influential for the populations include:

    - charisma to help with problem clarifications and keeping track of solutions,
    - transformational capacity to help bring about concerted focus on school goals,
    - transactional capacity to help bring about accelerated enculturation of new members into schools' expectations,
    - relationship orientation to help bring about enabling relations and interactions, and
    - task orientation to help enable academic activity and related tasks' completion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the above conclusions, discussion below offers recommendations for policy, practice and research aimed at school cultures that have the potentiality of enabling good academic performance in HDATSS.

Recommendations for policy and practice

Recommendations emerging from the above conclusions are that the starting point for practice and policy aimed at the formation of school cultures associated with good academic performance needs to be the development of feelings that are integrating and enthusing for the schools' populations. Such feelings result from common understandings embedded in communality and include senses of:

- belonging;
- security; and
- trust.

To help bring about such understandings and associated feelings it is recommended that the schools' leadership focus on:

- creating structures and processes that facilitate the understandings. Such structures could include student committees such as the RCL and its sub-committees and staff committees such as socials and disciplinary committees. Examples of related processes include mentorship, counselling, constant reminders in class, morning assemblies or though posters and notices on issues such as class rules and codes of conduct; and
- bringing about a sense of ownership through negotiated participatory decision making, school cultures reflective of member backgrounds, and encouragement of member initiative;

It is also recommended that the schools' cultures encourage individuality in order to foster the creative aspect of academic performance. This could be achieved, for example, through the incorporation of societal features such as diversity, inclusivity, equality and equity into communal school practice;

To help bring about cultures enthusing to the HDATSS', it is recommended that leadership focuses on bringing about features that help supplement disabling historical socio-economic deprivations. This could be achieved by utilizing time in such a way that it enables participation in extra-mural activities or by raising funds for educational materials or students in need.

Another recommendation emerging from the conclusions is that leadership focuses on facilitating the establishment of school culture with which the schools' populations identify and therefore find enthusing. Such features include could:

- verve which may be facilitated by invigorating extra-mural or cultural activities such as dance and singing; and
- ubuntu which may be to conveyed by portraying a sense of caring, humanity, for example, by being of service to the schools' populations are in need.

To help accomplish all of the above it is recommended that leadership engages in activities that will help diffuse leadership through the whole of the schools' populations. Ways in which this can be achieved include:

- enabling organic leadership emergence by providing individuals that possess leadership potential with opportunities for displaying the potential. Such opportunities include the creation of numerous committees in which the individuals may display their potential and get the opportunities to exercise their influence on the attitudes and actions others;
- shared leadership through structures such as various student and staff committees;
- developing leadership capacity, for example, through workshops;
- sharing concerted influence with emerging leadership, for example, through regular meetings with representatives of the committees and monitoring of the committee's influence.

A recommendation that accrues from the above is that the selection of school principals needs to be underpinned by a conceptualization that views leadership as *influence* rather than a hierarchically given process. Such a conceptualization stands to help identify applicants' potentialities to influence others' attitudes and actions, not just the capacity to control, manipulate and/or coerce. Also related to this, is that the selection of principals focuses on searching for capacity to share 'power' if the schools' leadership is to be diffused, collective and diversify to be appropriate and of service to the different components of the schools' communities.

Recommendations for related research

Even though this study may have contributed towards better understanding of issues relating to good academic performance in schools in general and in HDATSS in particular, gaps still exist in this understanding. This section provides a brief discussion on the perceived contributions of this study, identifies gaps still needing to be addressed, and offers recommendations on how this may be achieved.

This study involved the exploration of the relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership in HDATSS by examining the relationship in only two HDATSSs of varying academic performance by means of ethnography. As already indicated, the advantage of the methodology is that it provided in-depth understanding and 'thick' descriptions of the relationship, both of which stand to be of value in informing practice and policy directed at improving academic performance in similar schools. However, although the findings may be transferable to HDATSS that are in most respects similar to the sample schools (Ary, 1999), the small size of the sample means that the findings cannot be generalisable to all HDATSS with confidence. The findings therefore cannot provide an exclusive basis for related countrywide policy and practice. It is therefore recommended that this study be regarded as an exploration only that lays a foundation for subsequent investigations on similar issues. To achieve the desired generalizations, it is recommended that subsequent investigations on the matter be conducted by means of surveys and/or multiple case studies.

Reviewed literature suggests that local studies on issues relating to the improvement of academic performance in historically disadvantaged African schools tends to be targeted, as this study is, at township schools. A possible explanation for this 'confinement' is easy accessibility of township schools in terms of distance from institutions at which most of the researchers are located, and roads that are easier to negotiate than is the case with roads leading to rural schools. This deprives policy and practice of better understanding of practice relating to rural schools and the broader range of historically disadvantaged schools. It is thus recommended that researchers extend their focus beyond the 'confines' of township schools' if research is to produce insights that will have the desired impact on academic performance. One way this could be achieved is through increased funding of projects focusing on rural schools.

Also emerging from reviewed literature is that research for school improvement tends to adopt quantitative or semi-qualitative methodologies. Such methodologies are more suitable for studies on school effectiveness than they are for studies on school improvement. The former requires general overviews while the practice orientation of the latter requires in-depth understanding provided by 'thick' descriptions generated by more qualitative methodologies. The choice of ethnographic methodology for

conducting this study was aimed at helping break this cycle. The recommendation therefore is that subsequent related studies adopt methodologies more likely to provide 'thicker' analysis/ descriptions if they are to succeed in informing school improvement practice. The most promising methodology for producing findings likely to inform practice are those that are inclined towards grounded theory and micro-analysis offered by ethnography.

What also emerged from the reviewed literature is the tendency by researchers exploring school cultures and school leadership to rely on inappropriate conceptualizations and a tendency to be confined by predetermined theoretical frameworks. The former results in inappropriate methodologies whose findings inform practice insufficiently while the latter denies full exploration thus resulting in findings that similarly militate against the production of practice-related understanding. The understanding achieved in this study was made possible by a conceptualisation more enabling for developing enhanced understanding on the relationship of focus in this study than is the case of 'insufficient conceptualisation'. Where studies on school culture tend to view school culture only in terms of behavioural norms, this concept was in this study extended to underpinning values, beliefs and assumptions. Also, where studies on school leadership tend to rely on traditional views of leadership as the preserve of individuals in positions of official authority, leadership in this study was viewed as the capacity to influence the attitudes and actions of others, and therefore not necessarily confined to such individuals.

Lastly, research is an inconvenience to participants and an invasion of privacy. This is particularly the case if fieldwork is extended over a long period, as was the case with this study. The implied 'What's in it for us?' questions by certain participants in both sample schools hinted at the inconvenience and invasion. That the implied question was asked even after I had stated, at entry, that the findings resulting from this study would be disseminated through publications and teaching to inform related practice and policy, pointed to the possibility that such a promise was not deemed of value for the schools. A recommendation emerging from this experience is that researchers need to negotiate 'compensations' with participants in return for their assistance and for subjecting them to inconvenience.

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ANALYSIS OF SENIOR CERTIFICATE RESULTS : 2002

Pass rate in percent since 1996: Highest to lowest 2002

	NAME OF SCHOOL	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	DIFF. 2001 & 2002
1		100	72,5	100	79,19	72.50	98.00	100.00	2.00
2		78,8	57,4	40,19	21,9	95.35	90.38	89.80	-0.58
3		-	56,7	40	38,28	48.96	80.28	89.33	9.05
4								84.62	—
5		46,2	42,3	47,17	42,7	78.64	89.16	83.49	-5.67
6		19,7	14,3	39,19	52,94	30.77	70.00	78.57	8.57
7		82,2	65,7	66,67	74,74	73.44	61.11	**78.30**	**17.19**
8		31,4	25,5	22,34	21,3	75.00	61.61	**78.00**	**16.39**
9		34,4	37,7	22,35	19,61	61.97	72.29	75.47	3.18
10		92,5	62	31,55	44,55	50.96	56.00	**73.13**	**17.13**
11		-	-	-	-	13.64	44.00	**70.00**	**26.00**
12		60	28,7	30,16	39,33	46.67	81.37	64.90	-16.47
13		38	14	38,82	25,45	56.14	34.38	**64.81**	**30.43**
14		-	-	-	-	-	47.83	**60.00**	**12.17**
15		70	37,4	64,06	56,34	42.59	36.62	**53.13**	**16.51**
16		46,3	20,1	24,11	37,04	17.50	43.66	45.76	2.10 *
17		71,2	53,8	36,19	20,72	16.67	50.00	41.00	-9.00
18		15,6	15,4	10,42	13,48	25.33	19.64	**35.56**	**15.92**
19		64,9	16,7	17,24	27,45	61.36	20.83	**31.67**	**10.84**
20		-	11,5	27,07	28,57	3.45	20.00	24.44	4.44
21		35,7	39,1	34,55	18,44	18.84	19.05	17.24	-1.81

Bold = improved by 10% or more

* Results subject to amendment

ANALYSIS OF SENIOR CERTIFICATE RESULTS : 2002

Pass rate in percent since 1996: Highest to lowest 2002

	NAME OF SCHOOL	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	DIFF. 2001 & 2002
1					100	100	96.3	100.00	3.70
2		93,0	88,4	83,2	73,73	90.11	86.63	98.19	**11.56**
3		76,7	64,9	59,55	66,05	64.97	84.00	**94.04**	**10.04**
4		93,1	93,8	75,2	82,35	81.58	93.97	92.57	-1.40
5		50,0	29,2	15,7	47,06	46.55	67.03	**90.79**	**23.76**
6		93,2	92,9	75,7	88,89	88.89	92.78	90.74	-2.04
7		97,1	100	98,3	88,24	84.72	92.71	85.45	-7.26
8		-	65,3	62,5	76,0	71.43	84.21	78.07	-6.14
9		13,3	13,3	37,3	28,36	30.86	26.32	**78.05**	**51.73**
10		41,5	22,5	51,05	28,35	57.94	48.55	**76.58**	**28.03**
11		28,8	23,3	23,9	11,0	28.24	38.24	**74.60**	**36.36**
12		100	65,5	84,6	43,21	76.92	58.75	67.97	9.22
13		73,9	84,6	75,5	76,47	55.56	63.24	67.13	3.89
14		60,1	31,2	41,6	37,91	80.95	59.66	62.50	2.84
15		-	-	-	-	-	25.42	**53.49**	**28.07**
16		30,3	42,7	22,5	19,05	10.91	25.00	**50.00**	**25.00**
17		-	43,8	20,2	23,79	33.93	41.82	49.33	7.51
18		-	-	-	-	-	39.39	47.06	7.67
19		70,0	6,3	7,1	24,63	15.23	52.73	45.61	-7.12
20		-	100	100	100	50.00	12.5	**40.00**	**27.50**
21		39,1	32,1	26,1	27,37	22.46	45.61	38.46	-7.15
22		54,2	14,2	12,2	15,15	13.16	8.59	**34.04**	**25.45**
23		37,0	20,0	9,6	9,27	13.00	11.69	**31.58**	**19.89**
24		44,2	22,3	43,55	11,24	9.79	17.46	20.25	2.79
25		17,8	8,4	6,1	8,61	16.67	10.20	18.46	8.26

Bold = improved by 10% or more

The questionnaire is part of Ms T M Ngcobo's ongoing study at the school. The study explores the link between academic performance, school leadership and school culture in African schools. The aim of this questionnaire is to identify influential individuals at this school. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

1. Please indicate your 'gender' by placing the mark (x) next to it.

   (i) Female

   (ii) Male

2. Please indicate your age.

   (i) Below 25 years

   (ii) Between 25 - 35 years

   (iii) Between 35 - 45

   (iv) Above 45 years

3. How long have you been an educator at the school?

   (i) Less than 3 years

   (ii) Between 3 – 7 years

   (iii) Between 7 – 15 years

   (iv) More than 15 years

4. Please write names of three staff members that you feel influence educator attitudes and actions the most at the school.

   (i)

   (ii)

   (iii_

5. Which three staff members do you feel influence learner attitudes and actions the most at the school?

   (i)

   (ii)

   (iii)

6. Which three learners would you say influence learner attitudes and actions at the school the most?

   (i)

   (ii)

   (iii)

7. Please give three names and positions of people who are not learners or staff members at the school who also play a role in influencing learners' attitudes and actions.

   (i)

   (ii)

   (iii)

Thank you for your cooperation

The questionnaire is part of Ms T M Ngcobo's ongoing study at the school. The study investigates effective school leadership and culture/s in African schools. The aim of this questionnaire is to identify leaders at the school. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

1. Please indicate your 'gender' by placing the (x) mark next to it.

   (i) Female ☒

   (ii) Male ☐

2. Please indicate your age below.

   (i) Below 15 years ☐

   (ii) Between 15 - 17 years ☐

   (iii) Between 18 – 20 ☒

   (iv) Above 20 years ☐

3. How long have you been an educator at the school?

   (i) Less than 2 years ☐

   (ii) Between 3 – 5 years ☒

   (iii) More than 5 years ☐

4. Please write names of three staff members that you feel influence learner attitudes and actions the most at the school.

(i) Mr

(ii) Mrs

(iii_ Mr

5. Which three learners do you feel influence learner attitudes and actions the most at the school?

(i) Msawenkosi

(ii) Xulu

(iii) Mnewango

6. Give three names and positions of people who are not learners or staff members at the school who also play a role in influencing your school learners' attitudes and actions.

(i) Mr Mandela

(ii) (mom)

(iii) Mrs Mbotha (grandmother)

Thank you very much for your cooperation

During teaching practice

- site ~~tea~~ educators were very welcoming - most especially the subjects teachers - IsiZulu and Travel and Tourism.
- on the very first day I made up friends with teachers (both males and females).
- educators are very helpful in terms of assisting to adapt to the teaching and learning environment.

STAFF Room:

- there is no female staff room only one male - educators share one staff-room -

Advantages:

- sharing of ideas => except formal meetings on educator development educators share ideas as part of conversations on how to overcome any problems concerning teaching and learning.
- ~~the~~ learners that excell and those who do badly are known by all educators - this is done so that an educator whose subject seem to be giving learners hard time must see to it that he/she changes the system/way in which he/she presents a lesson. - this helps an educator to know his/her learners performance through other educators.

EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT / consultation.

- except by the ~~dept~~ department of education's ~~pro~~ development programme, educators themselves develop ~~themselves~~ through co-operation and peer development -
- no educator know-all - subject teachers always seek

advises ~~for~~ and share information with other teachers -
- if an educators does not teach e.g. English - does not mean that he/she does not know that subject →
- a grade 8 teacher can teach up to grade 12 -
- this is the belief of unselfishness.
-

Behaviour of Educators :
- ~~te~~ educators have different behaviours per individual but that does not alter pedagogy.
- overall behaviour of educators is very acceptable in terms of sch environment and practices.
-

Conflict resolving
- Site Management Team (SMT) is very responsible in terms of resolving problems if any among educators although conflict does not happen often - during my presence ~~during~~ (teaching practice) I have never experienced any conflict with educators and (SMT)

Principal
- he is very ~~on~~ dedicated to his position as the head of the schoo
- he is part of the family and does not isolate himself - he does not ~~abu~~ abuse his position by being autocratic.
- he is very diplomatic

LEARNER'S BEHAVIOUR in classroom situation.
- learners have again different behaviours - ~~but~~ per individual - but when it comes to classroom they all co-operate
- it is very surprising and amazing the way the learners behave because the school is located in KWA-MASHU ~~and~~ which is the township which is believed to ~~be~~ have delignent youth.
- it is unbelievable to see learners whom are known to be very delignent but co-operating successfully.

LEARNER TO LEARNER RELATIONSHIP

- learners are not divided into groups - they are only divided when they do/perform extra-curricula activities e.g. Indlamu, drummies, soccer, gospel music - but all in all, these activities make them to relate to each other because they are all under one umbrella, school ~~u~~ situation umbrella.
- good relations is accelerated by strong leadership of RCL of the school.
- they have good leadership skills and they can manage.
- ~~educato~~ learners help each other.

Overall Evaluation

- relating to all of the above, I ~~think~~ believe and convinced that it helps to improve learners capabilities and also for the teachers
- That is why the results are so good in this school.

GENERAL COMMENT

- I am convinced that in order for any school to get good results, the stakeholders should work hand in hand and extra hours should be used effectively. Morning and afternoon classes should be introduced to each and every high school for good of the school, ~~to~~ educators and learners themselves. Dedication is the only way to be successful. Differences between ~~teachers~~ educator-~~teacher~~ educator, learner-learner, learner-~~teac~~ educator should be resolved with immediate effect before altering teaching and learning.

Notes on visit to Nqabakazulu Comprehensive, 19/9/2002

My over-riding impression of the school was one of an institution that was harmonious and integrated. There appeared to be consensus around the idea of what a school is, how it should function, and the nature of appropriate roles within the school. I didn't see enough to be able to say it was a *happy* school, but it certainly was one in which all participants appeared to be *comfortable*. There was a sense of caring and trust, and the school was orderly without seeming to be disciplined (with the exception of a point dealt with below).

Examples of integration and consensus:

- Despite being unsupervised, movement within and around the school was purposeful (although not hurried or particularly quiet). Learners got to where they were supposed to be, and I saw instances of responsible behaviour when there was scope for irresponsible behaviour. Learners also had access to equipment in areas normally off-limits to all but staff, eg. learners arrived in the Deputy's office, looking for newspapers they needed. They found and took what they needed although the Deputy wasn't there.
- There was a good deal of tolerance with respect to certain activities, notably the boys playing musical instruments as part of the "cultural activity". This was disruptive. However, it was legitimate, and accordingly accepted or at least tolerated.
- The one lesson we observed was interesting in terms of the vexed issue of teacher control. When the teacher arrived, he did not have to tell a very noisy class to be quiet. When he was ready to begin, the class became quiet of its own accord. During the test there was scope for dishonest practice (cribbing, etc), as the teacher remained at the front of the class, doing his own work. I could see not malpractices even though I was on the lookout for them as I'd originally thought that the teaching was naively trusting to the extent that he was really 'asking for it'. The teacher's mode of addressing the class was interestingly non-directive, with polite imperative being 'hidden' (eg. "May I draw your attention to no. 5?")
- There was the striking paradox of latecomers (both boys and girls) having their hands lashed at the school gates and in the staffroom – under the very shadow of a large poster dealing with "Child Abuse", and not far from a recent newspaper cutting reporting the dismissal of a teacher on grounds of assaulting learners by administering corporal punishment. The fact that learners submitted to this treatment without protest can only be attributed, in my view, to there being consensus that this form of punishment was *legitimate* and expected.[1] There was no indication that corporal punishment was challenged or resented. I wouldn't attribute the order described above to fear of corporal punishment. This form of punishment seemed rather to operate as an accepted means of demonstrating, publicly, that transgression of agreed norms was unacceptable. In this sense, I think corporal punishment served to validate and underscore agreed norms about schooling and respective roles in the school.

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[1] In this sense, what was happening in the school reminded me of Pam Christie's work on "Schools as Disorganisations". Functional, or "resilient" schools were found to have robust disciplinary practices in some instances.

- The pattern of racial homogeneity within the school was disturbed by the presence of an HOD - an Indian man. However, there was clear evidence that he was accepted in the school, and that he felt comfortable in it. It seemed significant that he did not feel threatened travelling in and out of the township because, as he explained it, he knew that the community knew who he was and what he was doing in the school.

The Principal had been at the school for a number of years, and this may have contributed to the "settled" atmosphere in the school. But leadership struck me as being diffuse – apart from the assembly, I couldn't easily see where it resided. My guess is that it resided more in general consensus about schooling and roles than in an individual.

A secondary impression was one of surprise at that a school doing relatively well in terms of examination success should have (a) a locked library with plenty of very dusty books visible through murky window panes (b) the single classroom we went into was absolutely stark – not a single poster, picture or diagram on the walls. Potentially this raises some interesting speculative questions one would want to follow up, eg. is school consensus and harmony more powerful than resources in contributing to good exam results?

Ken Harley
25/9/2002

APPENDIX 7

The School of Education
University of Natal
Durban
31 January, 2002

The Chief Education Spesialist
The Department of Education
Durban North Region

Dear Sir

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am writing to request permission to undertake research at NqabakaZulu High Comprehensive School and Gugulabasha High School as part of my doctoral studies with the University of Natal. I hope to conduct the research over a six month period at the former school and over a three month period at the latter school by means of ethnographic methodology

The title of my study is 'the relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership in historically disadvantaged African secondary schools: implications for leadership'. The purpose is to develop better understanding into school cultures that have the potential of enabling good academic performance in historically disadvantaged schools and, in the process, develop better understanding into leadership associated with such school cultures.

Thank you
Yours faithfully

Ms TM Ngcobo
Lecturer: education management
School of Education
University of Natal
Durban

The School of Education

University of Natal
Durban
11 February, 2002

The School Principal
Fundiseka/Umzamo
KwaMashu/Ntuzuma

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter is to request permission to conduct research at your school. The research is part of my doctoral studies with the University of Natal. Its topic is 'The relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership in historically disadvantaged African township secondary schools'.

The purpose of the study is to identify and develop a better understanding into school cultures that enable good academic performances in historically disadvantaged schools and in the process develop better understanding into leadership implications for the formation of such school cultures. To develop such and understanding the study will be conducted by means of an ethnographic methodology over a period of six school months lasting from August 2002 – March 2003. The research will involve observations, questionnaires, interviews with selected staff and students and an analysis of documents such as the school rules and development plan.

Your cooperation in the matter will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Ms TM Ngcobo
Lecturer: Education management
School of Education
University of Natal
Durban

APPENDIX 9: 'ACTING UP'? – UMZAMO

Monday - morning following the Friday of the Athletics competitions:

The principal stops to chat with me on the veranda and complains that the reason the school's academic performance is poor is because teachers waste time on useless non-academic issues. He refers to the Friday event as one example of such time wasting. He is angry that that the teachers had not informed him that there would be no classes before the event took place and that the only reason this had happened was because he had arrived late at school on that day as he had gone to the district office on business before coming to school. He then goes on to say that he is not going to allow things like this to happen at his school and that he was going to call a meeting the following day to discuss the matter.

Same day – break:

An inquiry about the matter from the sports' organizer has him very angry at the principal. The teacher claims that it has always been practice not to have classes on days on which the school was involved in athletics competitions. The teacher goes on to claim that he had actually discussed the day's programme with the principal.

Wednesday – my next visit to the school:

I inquire from the above teacher about the meeting that the principal had said he would be convening. The teacher states that the principal had convened no such meeting!

APP: 10

GRADE : ——

PERIOD REGISTER OF CLASS

e.	Subject	Teacher	number of pupils in class	Absentees	List of pupils playing truancy	CLASS REP/R.C.L.
P1						
P2						
			BREAK 1			
P3						
P4						
			BREAK 2			
P5						

APPENDIX 11: AN EXAMPLE OF LEARNER-CENTREDNESS AT FUNDISEKA

30.01.03

Class observation: Grade 12 (C) – Mathematics class taught by Mr K., one of the young male teachers identified as one of fairly influential individuals at the school.

This is the second period in the day stretching from 09.00 – 10.00

Teacher passes a joke with class as he walks in – students respond positively. He then invites students to work out sums on the board given to the class as homework the previous day. He instructs students to correct mistakes in the sums as soon as noticed.

First sum is by a girl student pointed out 'randomly' (the students did not raise her hand when the teacher asked those who wanted to come to the board to raise their hands) by the teacher. When finished the teacher asks from the class whether the sum is correct. All students respond positively.

Second sum is also by a girl students also pointed out 'randomly' by the teacher. Students interrupt to point out errors as they occur with the teacher pointing out another error not picked out by the class and makes clarification.

Three subsequent sums are worked out by boy students who had their hands up. A similar procedure is followed: – the class points out errors with the teacher giving explanations where the class indicates confusion, for example, by disagreeing with one another.

At the end of the lesson the teacher revises the formula for working out the sums. He then gives a 'motivational' speech in which he praises students that had attended his class in the morning before the start of the official school day and encourages those who hadn't to do so. He also encourages students participates in extra-mural activities. This gives him an opportunity to show-case a musical CD recorded by him and the group of students under his leadership.

The class continues well into the break with students not showing signs of anxiety over this.

After class I converse with the student I sat next to during the lesson, asking him how he felt about the lesson. The student claims he enjoys Mr K's class because he treats them as his equals, shares jokes with them and makes sure that everyone understands his lessons.

APP: 12

CPMREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL

VISION:

We strive to provide high quality Services to our Community and to produce highly skilled, proud, productive and responsible citizens who can make a meaningful contribution in the democratic life of this Developing Country.

Thus maintaining our established honourable position of being a shinning beacon of excellence.

MISSION STATEMENT.

This we shall achieve/realise by:-

- **Creating a healthy, secured, friendly and intellectually stimulating environment for our learners, educators and all.**
- **To continuously ensure the empowerment of human resources (educators, support staff, and material resources (physical buildings, equipment) to attain maximum productivity.**
- **Putting in place systems and structures for the effective and efficient management of financial resources.**
- **Providing a curriculum that directly responds to the economic demands of our community, and the world at large.**

APP! 13

I J COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEANERS:-

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is essential, reasons for any absence must be given in writing by the parent or guardian. A medical certificate must be produced for an absence of 3 days or larger as a result of illness. Parents have a legal and moral obligation to see that their children attend school regulary.

B LEAVE

Parents/Guardians must not keep their children at home for chores such as paying rent, looking after the baby, etc. Appointment with doctors etc. should be made after school hours. Parent/Guardians who request leave for their children should preferably call at school to pick up at the appointment time. Telephone requests for leave will not be entertained. Letters from the parents asking for permission must be submitted to the class teacher at the beginning of the school day.

C. PUNCTUALITY

All late comers, unless as a result of events beyond their control, will have to do manual work. Learners are expected to be at school by 7:30, school closes at 14:30 Monday to Thursday, 13h00 on Fridays.

D. VALUABLES

Learners must not bring large sums of monye, jewellery or other valuables to school. Learners must also be vigilant and guard against theft of personal belongings such as books,calculators, uniform, etc. The school shall not be responsible for loss of or damage to any valuables, regadless of the cause of such loss or damage. Only wristwatches, Medic Alert discs, First Aid or school badges may be worn.

E UNIFORM

i. BOYS:- Grey trousers, white shirts, Green striped neck tie, Green Blaze or Jersey and or Cardigan, black shoes. The following are not permitted:- coloured shirts, takkies, beards, caps or hats, jewelery.'

GIRLS:- Tunic or skirt, school shirt, school jersey, white socks, plain black shoes, green blazer. Hair should be neatly groomed if short and plaited or tied if long. One pair of stud - type earring may be worn in the ears only. The following are not permitted: Fancy jewellery, takkies, painted fingernails.

School uniform is to be worn at all times during school and at school functions unless otherwise authorised by the school.
All learners in the Technical workshop must wear an overall to protect their clothes. Learners who non-school (incorrect) uniform will have such clothes confiscated if so interpreted by the principal. If correctuniform cannot be worn, the learner must produce a letter from the parent/guardian whereina reason for the circumstances is given and a date for reversion to the correct uniform.

Boys must be clean - shaven at all times.

F HOMEWORK AND CLASSWORK

All learners are expected to diligently apply themselves in the classroom and when doing homework.Parents/Guardians are expected to play a responsible role in checking the progress of their children by monitoring their schoolwork. It is the responsibility of the learner to catch up on work missed as a result of absence from lessons. Learners are expected to become conversant with the system of continuous assessment. Books required for classwork must be available at all times and all work and tasks must be completed on due date.

G. TEXT - BOOKS AND STATIONARY

Learners should ensure that all text books and stationey are well cared for. It is expected of parents/Guardians to oversee and encourage their chidren in this regard. Should all loan books not be returned, testimonials, transfers, further replaced or paid for. The same applies to learners who damage school property and fail to replace or repair.

H NOTICES/ADVERTISEMENT

[illegible] advertisements, pictures or any other literature may be displayed/

I PROHIBITED GOODS

Learners may not have in their possession the following:

1. Drugs, alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, tobacco or similar harzadous goods.
   - random searches TO BE CONDUCTED BY EDUCATORS AND SAPS.
2. Objectional printed matter, photographs, recorded matter, stolen property or addictive medicines not prescribed for them.
3. An object which is not prescribed for the school curriculum and which is potentially harmful to endangers the physical welfare of others on the premises.
4. Toys, skateboards, weapons, fireworks, inflammable fluids or any other materials prohibited in the school.
5. Pets, reptiles, captive animals and other.
6. Electronic equipment (eg. radios, walk-mans, cassette recorders and computers) without prior permission from a staff -member.
7. School equipment without authorisation from the responsible staff-members.

Noted
P35 3

SGB :-

1. EDUCATOR REP :- (i)
   (ii)

2. R C L :- (i)
   (ii)
   (iii) N. Khanyile
   (iv)

APP: 15

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that the display of visual material comprising our school buildings and members in the thesis on the 'relationship between academic performance, school culture and school leadership in historically disadvantaged African secondary schools: implications for leadership' by Ms TM Ngcobo is with the school's informed consent.

Signed
(Principal: 'Fundiseka' Comprehensive High School)

Date 19/10/2005