PERCEPTIONS OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS 
AND LEARNERS ON THE EFFECTS OF OVERCROWDING IN 
CLASSROOMS ON LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN MALUTI 
DISTRICT, EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE 

by 

GIDWELLMONWABISIMBANGENI 

A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of 

MASTER OF EDUCATION (M.Ed) 

(Educational Policy and Development) 

at 

WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY 

Supervisor: DR. N.A.P. BOADUO FRC 

Co-supervisor: DR.M.J. MOLEPO 

September 2015
ABSTRACT

The study investigated overcrowding classrooms and its impact on learners and teachers’ performance, efficiency and effectiveness. This action was prompted by the researcher’s observation of learners’ poor performance and teachers’ loss of instructional time in overcrowded classrooms. Literature was reviewed to place the study in gap lapse prospective which this study was to fill. Quantitative research method was used to be able to collect the most applicable data that would be able to produce valid and reliable information for the compilation of the research report.

Revelations from the collected data were that overcrowded classrooms have adverse effects on both the teacher and learner performance and activities in schools where overcrowding is evident. Based on the revelations the research made some recommendations to contribute towards finding solution to the problem investigated in this study.

The conclusion that could be drawn was that there is need for the Department of Education (DoE) to conduct elaborate study in schools where overcrowding exists and make a concerted effort to provide adequate classrooms to be able to help learners and teachers benefit from the provision of education being delivered.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I wish to acknowledge the positive attitude and reception received from my supervisor Dr. N.A.P. Boaduo F.R.C. and co-supervisor Dr. M.J. Molepo for their unflinching assistance, constructive suggestions and encouragement they provided me in abundance to be able to complete the compilation of this study report.

- I also acknowledge Dr. Z.M. Mnukwa for motivating me to do this degree at WSU and the unwavering support I received from him and the staff members of Manguzela J.S.S. especially Ms. R. Mohoto, Ms. N. Mzimkulu and Ms. T. Sotomela.

- The Almighty God should also be praised for guiding me through this arduous study path.
DECLARATION
I, Monwabisi Gidwell Mbangeni, declare that this mini-dissertation titled: **Perceptions of Junior Secondary School Educators on the Effects of Overcrowding in Classrooms on Learner Performance in Maluti District, Eastern Cape Province**, is my own work supervised by the supervisors already indicated in the acknowledgement. It has never been submitted for a qualification in another institution of higher learning. All the sources I have used have been indicated by means of complete references.

Candidate: Monwabisi Gidwell Mbangeni

Signature:...........................

Date:..................
DECLARATION OF PLAGIARISM

(i) I am aware that plagiarism is defined at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) as the inclusion of another’s or other’s ideas, writings, works, discoveries and inventions from any source in an assignment or research output without the due, correct and appropriate acknowledgement to the author(s) or source(s) in breach of the values, conventions, ethics and norms of the different professional, academic and research disciplines and includes unacknowledged copying from intra- and internet and peers/fellow students.

(ii) I have duly and appropriately acknowledged all references and conformed to avoid plagiarism as defined by WSU.

(iii) I have made use of the citation and referencing style stipulated by my lecturer/supervisor.

(iv) This submitted work is my own.

(v) I did not and will not allow anyone to copy my work and present it as his/her own.

(vi) I am committed to uphold academic and professional integrity in the academic/research activity.

(viii) I am aware of the consequences of engaging in plagiarism.

_________________________  ______________________
Signature of student                 Date
DEDICATION
This study is dedicated to my mother Albertina Mavundle Mbangeni and my wife Moleboheng Portia Moleko-Mbangeni who gave me love, care and support during the difficult times of my studies; and my children Aseza, Lulonke and Mihle who understood and coped with the many times I deprived them of my love and company during the many times I travelled to WSU for consultation in terms of my studies. The support of all these people has been persistent and that they deserve this dedication.
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ...................................................................................................................... i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................... ii

DECLARATION .............................................................................................................. iii

DECLARATION OF PLAGIARISM ............................................................................... iv

DEDICATION ................................................................................................................... v

CHAPTER 1 ..................................................................................................................... 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY ................................................................................. 1

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

1.2. Background to the study ..................................................................................... 2

1.3 Statement of the problem ....................................................................................... 3

1.4. Theoretical framework ......................................................................................... 4

1.4.1 Sensory stimulation theory ............................................................................... 5

1.5. Conceptual framework ......................................................................................... 6

1.5.1 Student learning and school achievement ....................................................... 7

1.6. Main research question ....................................................................................... 8

1.6.1 Subsidiary research questions ......................................................................... 8

1.7 Aim of the study ................................................................................................... 9

1.7.1 Objectives of the study .................................................................................... 9

1.8. Rationale of the study ......................................................................................... 9

1.9. Significance of the study .................................................................................... 10

1.10. Delimitations of the study ............................................................................... 10

1.11. Limitations to the study ................................................................................... 11

1.12. Definitions of terms .......................................................................................... 12

1.13. Outline of chapters ........................................................................................... 13

1.14. Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 14

CHAPTER 2 ..................................................................................................................... 16

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE ....................................................................... 16

2.1. Introduction .......................................................................................................... 16

2.2 Problems faced by teachers in overcrowded classrooms ................................... 18

2.3. Effects of overcrowding on learner performance .............................................. 19

2.4 Health risks associated with overcrowded classrooms ...................................... 23
2.5 Ways and effects of eliminating overcrowding in classrooms ........................................ 25
2.6 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 26

CHAPTER 3 .......................................................................................................................... 28
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ..................................................................... 28
3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 28
3.2 Research design .............................................................................................................. 28
3.3 Quantitative research approach ..................................................................................... 29
3.3.1 Justification for a Quantitative Approach ................................................................ 30
3.4 Population, sample and sampling technique .................................................................. 30
3.5 Research instruments ..................................................................................................... 32
3.5.1 Validity and reliability of instrument ....................................................................... 33
3.6 Pilot study ........................................................................................................................ 33
3.7 Data collection procedure for main study ....................................................................... 34
3.8 Ethical considerations .................................................................................................... 34
3.9 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 36

CHAPTER 4 .......................................................................................................................... 37
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION ....................................................................... 37
4.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 37
4.1.1 Subsidiary research questions as presented in 1.1.6 ................................................. 37
4.2 Principals responses and interpretation to statements .................................................... 38
4.3 Educators responses and interpretation of statements .................................................... 44
4.4 Learners responses and interpretation to statements ....................................................... 52
4.5 Discussions of the findings ............................................................................................. 61
4.6 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 66

CHAPTER 5 .......................................................................................................................... 68
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS ................. 68
5.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 68
5.2 Summary of the study ...................................................................................................... 68
5.3 Implications of the study ............................................................................................... 74
5.4 Recommendations for practice ..................................................................................... 75
5.4.1 State budget must be allocated according to the needs ............................................. 75
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Scores for questionnaire responses from principals  47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Overcrowded classroom is indication of lack of infrastructure  52
Figure 2: Overcrowded classroom affects instruction time and methods  53
Figure 3: Overcrowded classrooms affect learners’ performance  54
Figure 4: Learners’ welfare is at risk in overcrowded classrooms  55
Figure 5: Overcrowding affect learners’ ability to concentrate  56
Figure 6: Aggression of learners is evident in overcrowded classrooms  56
Figure 7: Educators have no control of learners in overcrowded classrooms  57
Figure 8: Educators spend more time to control learners than to teach  58
Figure 9: Overcrowded classroom contributes to learner absenteeism  59
Figure 10: Overcrowded classroom contributes inability to follow instruction  59
Figure 11: As a learner overcrowding in classrooms is not good for me  60
Figure 12: Overcrowding in the classroom make learners to fight  61
Figure 13: Overcrowding does not give classroom space to learners  62
Figure 14: There is always noise in overcrowded classrooms  63
Figure 15: Teachers cannot give individual attention in overcrowded classrooms

Figure 16: Learner infection in overcrowded classroom is high

Figure 17: Learners are not able to move freely in overcrowded classrooms

Figure 18: There is always competition for space

Figure 19: Learners fight for seating space

Figure 20: Overcrowded classroom does not promote friendship
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Adequate space in terms of furnishing and ventilation of classrooms are prerequisites for learning and must be recognized as a fundamental education necessity. Overcrowding, on the other hand, unquestionably has a direct and often severe impact on the logistics of the school. Gary (1995) is of the view that schools with a high proportion of students living in poor, overcrowded classrooms can have adverse effect on teaching and learning.

According to Workplace (1992), overcrowding is a condition where organism numbers exceed the carrying capacity of its habitat. Literally, the term usually refers to the relationship between the human population and its environment. In this study it is the classroom and the abnormal number of learners it carries, for example when a standard classroom is supposed to accommodate 30 learners, and it accommodates 85 learners or more. Chan (1980) identified a positive relationship between the physical environment and academic achievement of learners.

In cases where increases in admission of enrolment are expected to continue, the only guarantee of a long-term means of relieving overcrowding is the expensive and time-consuming process of building new classrooms or renovating existing classrooms at the schools. In cases where increases in enrolment may be temporary, stop-gap measures are needed while new classrooms are built, however, there are a number of short-term solutions; for example, finding a new space, whether through leasing, making
collaborative arrangements, relocating administrative space, or using existing space efficiently. Cash (1993), Hines (1996) and Lanham (1999) have found that there is a relationship between the physical and environmental conditions of a school building and student achievement and student behavior.

1.2. Background to the study

The condition of Government schools all over the country and quality of education being imparted, are going from bad to worse, day by day. Government and the concerned Education Department have no check and balance over quality of education (Khan & Iqbal, 2012). Douglas et al. (2004) have observed that a logical and simple definition of overcrowding is used by the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) (2000) indicating that a school is overcrowded when the number of students enrolled is larger than the number the school was designed to accommodate. Khan and Iqbal (2012) further argue that the average number of students in most of classrooms ranges from 70 to 120. It creates many problems for both, teachers and students in teaching-learning process.

The office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (2004) observed that there was good evidence of a relationship between meningitis and overcrowding. Another study by Baker, McNicholas, Garret, Jones, Stewart, Koberstein and Lennon (2012) on meningococcal disease in New Zealand found that the incidence of the disease was independently associated with overcrowding. Meningitis rates were twice as high in the most overcrowded wards compared to the least overcrowded.
Corcoran, Walker and White (1988) found that overcrowding and heavy teacher workloads created stressful working conditions which lead to higher teacher absenteeism. Overcrowded classrooms not only make it difficult for students to concentrate during lesson delivery but inevitably limit the amount of time teachers can spend on innovative teaching methods such as co-operative learning and group work. An additional challenge is that a teacher must constantly struggle to simply maintain order in an overcrowded classroom instead of concentrating on teaching and helping students to learn. The likelihood is that both the teacher and learners suffer from burnout earlier than they would be in the course of the school day.

1.3 Statement of the problem
The primary school sector faces numerous challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate teaching and learning materials and inadequate learning facilities (World Bank, 2010). Learners’ success is dependent on several factors that range from the actions of all the stakeholders in the education cycle. The many players in the basic education sector include learners, teachers, school authorities, parents and the government. While the ultimate desire is the success of as many if not all learners, such an ideal situation is impossible due to several negative factors which are inflicted independently or dependently, and intentionally or unintentionally by the individual stakeholders.

The classroom is the most important area within a school. The students spend most of their time, hopefully in an environment conducive to learning. The entire design of classroom reflects the priorities, goals, philosophy, personality and teaching style of the student. Student learning behavior can be enhanced when teachers take time to create
a classroom climate in which adolescents feel comfortable with their teachers and peers. But unfortunately, in our country the classrooms are overcrowded (Khan & Iqbal, 2012). It was the intention of this study to investigate the effects of overcrowding in classrooms on learner academic performance in selected schools in Maluti.

1.4. Theoretical framework
It is a necessity to provide a theoretical frame work for a research study. The construction of theories, according to Boaduo (2011) is to explain, predict and master phenomena, which are relationships, events, behaviours and performances. The theoretical framework is the construction of models of reality in a certain working environment. In this study, it was the investigation of overcrowded classrooms and how these impacted on learners’ learning and performance.

The theoretical framework, therefore, is the structure that can hold or support the research work in terms of overcrowding of classrooms. It presents the theory, which explains why the problem under investigation exists. Furthermore, the main theory guiding this study is the implications theory of overcrowded environments (Boaduo, 2011). The researcher understands that effective learning occurs when both the teacher and the learner are motivated. According to Mullins (2002) and Daft (2003) motivation is made up of forces internal or external which direct the way and persistence of action through enthusiasm. This study is guided by the sensory stimulation theory of learning.
1.4.1 Sensory stimulation theory

Traditional sensory stimulation theory has as its basic premise that effective learning occurs when the senses are stimulated (Laird, 1985). Laird quotes research that found that the vast majority of knowledge held by adults (75%) is learned through seeing. Hearing is the next most effective (about 13%) and the other senses — touch, smell and taste — account for 12% of what we know.

By stimulating the senses, especially the visual sense, learning can be enhanced. However, this theory says that if multi-senses are stimulated, greater learning takes place. Stimulation through the senses is achieved through a greater variety of colours, volume levels, strong statements, facts presented visually, use of a variety of techniques and media.

The study intended to establish the possibilities of stimulating the senses for effective learning in overcrowded conditions as in many schools particularly in rural areas. This is due to the fact that classes are very large and there is not much opportunity for individual attention from overworked educators (Le Roux, 1994. p.36). The situation in these schools leaves learners constantly at risk of failure. Vink (1992) has observed that there is a causal relationship between the number of learners per educator per class and the quality of education received. Overcrowding leads to the following:

- Congestion and discomfort which hamper academic activity
- Overcrowded classes increase the workload of the teacher
- Overcrowding makes class management difficult
• It inhibits interactions between the teacher and the learner; and

• Militates against the teacher giving learners individual attention by the teacher

(Masitsa, 1995. pp.181-183)

All the listed inhibiting factors found in overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to teach effectively and for the learners to learn effectively. Under such conditions, learners are unable to perform to their full potential thus leading to poor performance. Le Roux (1994) observes that overcrowding and inadequate classrooms are some of the conditions that lead to destructive behavior in children. A limited environment for learners can lead to in them aggressive behavior because of limited space.

1.5. Conceptual framework
The formulation of the theoretical framework is followed by the development of the conceptual framework to guide the study in terms of the researcher’s articulation of the study process. Literally, a concept is an image or symbolic representation of an abstract idea. In this study, the investigation into overcrowded classrooms is going to be considered and investigated further to provide the main substance of the study being undertaken.

Generally, the conceptual framework is a complex mental formulation of skills and experiences, which the researcher is supposed to master to be able to articulate the study effectively. In short, while the theoretical framework is the theory on which the study is based, the conceptual framework is the operationalization of the theory which guides the practical articulation of the research process from the beginning to the end.
For instance, in this study the investigation into overcrowded classrooms was operationalized in order to be able to collect the required data to respond to the research problem. The gathering of the primary data was through the structured questionnaire which enabled the researcher to identify the basis for finding solutions to the challenges inherent in overcrowded classrooms in schools, and this made it possible to find a solution to the research problem under investigation.

1.5.1 Student learning and school achievement
In attempting to understand what factors are most important in affecting students’ learning which are reflected in a student’s school achievement, most investigators tend to look at variables pertaining to the school and teacher characteristics (Chonjo, 1994). Folger and Breda (1989) suggested that in order to determine the quality of an individual school, it is usual to observe the facilities of the schools and the characteristics of the teaching qualifications, data on pupil achievement, access to reading materials or textbook availability, the class size, teacher-student ratios, size of staff, location of the school, etc. However, in developing countries the major proportion of explained achievement variance is due to the school characteristic and the teacher quality (Heyneman & Loxley, 1983). The poorer the country is economically, the more impact on achievement the school quality and teachers seem to have (Chonjo, 1994).

In this study, the concept of ‘class size’ was being investigated to ascertain its effects on student achievement and the manner it affected that. The researcher developed his own position on the problem investigated which gave direction to the study. It was guided by the above observation as well as the country’s general economic ranking.
1.5.2 Acronyms

- D.O.E. : Department of Education
- Q.T. : Quality teaching
- Q.L. : Quality learning
- L.P. : Learner participation
- Q.L.T : Quality learning and teaching

1.6. Main research question

What are the effects of overcrowding in classrooms on learner performance in selected schools in Maluti District, Eastern Cape Province?

1.6.1 Subsidiary research questions

1. How does overcrowding affect teachers’ effectiveness and efficiency in terms of performance in teaching?

2. How does overcrowding affect learner performance?

3. What are the health risks related to overcrowding in classrooms?

4. What can be done to eliminate overcrowding and its effects in classrooms?
1.7 Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of overcrowding in classrooms on learner performance.

1.7.1 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine ways through which overcrowding affect teachers’ effectiveness and efficiency in terms of performance in teaching.

2. Establish how overcrowding affect learner performance.

3. Identify the health risks related to overcrowding in classrooms.

4. Establish what can be done to eliminate overcrowding and its effects in classrooms.

1.8. Rationale of the study

The issue of overcrowded classrooms in many schools particularly in rural areas is not new or expected to disappear anytime soon. “Classes are very large and there is not much opportunity for individual attention from overworked educators” (Le Roux, 1994, p.36). The rationale for the study was therefore to identify and investigate the problems of overcrowded classrooms in schools. This became necessary because without a proper investigation into the problem of overcrowding in classrooms, learners and teachers’ performance will not measure up to expectations. Based on that, it therefore, became imperative to undertake this study.
1.9. Significance of the study

The study will be of benefit to learners and teachers when some of the factors have been identified and addressed. This study can be used to provide educational leaders, politicians and community members with documentation regarding the effects overcrowding has on learner performance. It can then be used to assist the school and district development plans in appropriating its funds to dealing with overcrowding in classrooms to improve the conditions of the classrooms which appear to have a significant and negative influence on learners’ academic performance.

1.10. Delimitations of the study

The study was conducted in three selected junior secondary schools in the Maluti District, Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. These schools comprised of three principals, thirty learners and fifteen educators. The study was conducted in these schools because the intention was to investigate the impact of overcrowding on learner performance, the number chosen was appropriate for such a purpose as it comprised of schools in different management circuits. Despite that there are numerous factors at play, this study focused specifically on the effects of overcrowding in classrooms on the performance of learners.
1.11. Limitations to the study

This study might be affected by the reluctance by some participants to give accurate and realistic information on the impact of overcrowding on learner performance. They might be unwilling to give information to a person who is at their own level and who presently will not even assist them in finding a solution to the problem under investigation in order to improve their situation. To resolve this problem, the researcher decided to have a personal discussion with respondents to explain and encourage the need for the investigation being undertaken to resolve overcrowding in schools.

Another hurdle was time; because schools have a number of programmes they have to complete. To overcome this limitation, consultation appointments were made to enable respondents to choose convenient timing to administer instruments. Weather could also have been a serious problem because to reach some of the sampled schools, big rivers had to be crossed; these are often in flood making schools inaccessible. To resolve this problem, the researcher collected data during the dry season.

Funding could have been problem but Walter Sisulu University provided research funding which the researcher augmented with his own money in order to be able to complete the study.
1.12. Definitions of terms

**Overcrowding:** This is a condition where an organism number exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat (Workplace, 1992).

**Learner:** The South African Schools Act (1996) defines learner as any person receiving education or who is obliged to receive education.

**Performance:** Waite (1998, p.469) defines performance as the process or manner of doing or functioning.

**Academic achievement:** Annie et al. (1996) defines ‘academic achievement’ as the outcome of education –the extent to which a student teacher or institution has achieved their education goals. Academic achievement is commonly measured by examination or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best measured or which aspects are most important.

**Class:** The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 defines class as a group of learners who are under the administrative supervision of a class teacher. Khan and Iqbal (2012) define a class as a group of pupil put together for the purpose of collective instructions. All the members of the class have common goals, interests, aptitudes and attainments.
**Classroom:** This is room or place, especially in a school, in which classes or lessons are conducted.

**Overcrowded classroom:** A classroom is said to be overcrowded in which the number of students exceed the optimum level such that it causes hindrance in the teaching-learning process (Khan & Iqbal, 2012).

**Department of Education:** This is the department established in terms of section 7(2) read with Schedule 1 of the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation 103 of 1994), responsible for education at national level.

**Educator:** According to the National Education Policy Act (1996, p.1), educator refers to any person who educates, teaches, or trains other persons in an institution or assists in providing education to learners.

### 1.13. Outline of chapters

The following outline of chapters was used in the compilation of the study report:-

**Chapter 1** provided the topic, the introduction and the background of the study problem for the investigation including the main and subsidiary research questions. The aims and objectives were stated including the delimitations and limitations. The rational
and significance were covered including the theoretical and contextual frameworks. The acronyms that were used in the compilation of the research report were also explained.

Chapter 2 discussed the literature review in order to be able to place this study in its context and to be able to identify and establish the gap lapse, which the study supposed to fill.

Chapter 3 provided the methodological choice and application. Detailed provision in this respect was provided to situate the study in its proper methodological paradigmatic perspective. Ethical considerations as well as validity and reliability issues were noted.

Chapter 4 discussed the treatment, analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

Chapter 5 cover the identified findings revealed by the collected data, together with recommendations based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study.

1.14. Conclusion

This chapter has provided the basis for the study to be conducted. In the process the following have been fully covered – introduction, background, statement of the problem, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, aim and objectives, main and
subsidiary research questions, significance and rationale of the study, limitations and delimitations, acronyms used in the compilation of the report and the outline of chapters as used in this report following by this conclusion.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

In this section the researcher reviews the literature about the effects overcrowding in classrooms has on learner academic performance. The researcher wanted to ascertain how overcrowding or differences in class size and composition affected students (including their achievement and affective outcomes) and its effect on teachers and the school. Mark (1996: p.365) is of the view that the literature review in a research study should serve the following purposes and functions:

- to demonstrate mastery of the literature reviewed in the field and which is proposed for the study;
- to acquaint the reader with the existing knowledge on the subject;
- to discuss the proposed study in relation to the current literature on the study being undertaken; and
- to display both the conceptual and the theoretical framework of the study.

In view of Mark’s (1996) list provided above the literature reviewed requires selected documents on the research topic that have to be taken into consideration. Haywood and Wagg (1982) can cut with Mark when they comment that critical literature reviews are more often of greater importance to a research study than uncritical literature reviews which are described as the furniture sale catalogue in which everything merits a
one-paragraph entry, regardless of how it has been conducted. The researcher is also of the view that in theory, a literature review forms an essential part of the research process and constitutes a vital part of the whole project in itself. It is a critical synthesis of previous research, which has been undertaken and that helps to validate the need for the study to be conducted. The evaluation of the literature reviewed leads logically to the formulation of the research questions that may constitute the basis for both formulation of the questionnaire and interview schedules which form the instrumentation for the collection of the main primary data required to complete the study. In general, a literature review, if appropriate, leads depth and breadth and places the study in its perspective thus making a relevant contribution to the knowledge database.

According to Hart (1998), the purpose of the literature review is to, among other things, distinguish what is to be done from what has been done in terms of the study. Boaduo et al. (2011) regards this as filling the gap lapse, which the new study has to do in. Terms of discovering important variables relevant to the topic and identifying the relationships between ideas and practices for introspection. It is therefore imperative to interrogate the impact of overcrowding on learner performance.
2.2 Problems faced by teachers in overcrowded classrooms

The destiny of any country is shaped in the millions of her classrooms. The Indian Education Commission (1964, p.66) stated that the classroom is the centre stage for teaching and learning in the school. Unfortunately, the Educational institutions in India are often characterized by large numbers of learners in the classrooms. The overcrowded classroom creates an obstacle in the progressive activities of the classroom teaching learning process. Overcrowded classroom also to some extent, hinder or prevent the teacher from achieving the instructional objectives and the three modes of domains such as the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. According to David (2009), in overcrowded classrooms, teachers may spend most of their time in demanding students' attentiveness or concentrating on classroom management activities to regulate students' activities in a proper way. This causes the entire class (including the teachers) to feel discomfort. The teachers may do the minimum of teaching and watch the clock to avoid the unfavorable environment of overcrowded classroom. Their worries are likely to be revealed to fellow teachers and others.

Instruction in a large group is a challenging task to any teacher who is involved in any form of effective teaching-learning processes inside the classroom (Shan & Inamullah, 2012). Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for a teacher to attain the specified objectives of teaching (Carlson, 2000). At the same time, it becomes very difficult for the teacher to have any positive interactions with the learners in a large group. Other previous studies expressed the view that discipline problems occurred in overcrowded classrooms (Maxfield & David, 2009). These previous studies further revealed the
teachers' views on overcrowded classrooms and student teacher ratios (Haimson, 2009; Konstantopoulos & Li, 2012; Jensen, 2010).

The pertinent literature reviewed above revealed the managerial problems of classrooms. From the above related studies, it is clear that overcrowding creates difficulties in the teaching-learning process. All these studies cited above supported the researcher’s argument that teachers as managers of classrooms and schools experienced and encountered a series of challenges that emanated from overcrowding.

2.3. Effects of overcrowding on learner performance
The class size/overcrowding debate has included a broad spectrum of positions. On one edge of the spectrum is the view represented in Haddad’s (1978) review of the literature for the World Bank. In summarizing his review, Haddad wrote that “an increase in class size does not necessarily lead to a decrease in level of academic achievement. Likewise, a decrease in class size does not guarantee an improvement in the social environment of learning. Not all researchers, however have concluded that class size/overcrowding has no effect. A number of researchers have argued that some relationships do exist between class size and student outcomes, and others argue that the evidence is still inconclusive.

According to Bloch (2011), the term “overcrowding” is often associated with the state school system in South Africa. A recent National Education Infrastructure Management System audit reported that 6 331 schools, or 23% of all the schools had an average of 45 pupils to a classroom – 10 pupils more than the required learner-teacher ratio. Overcrowding in schools is, however, not only a South African problem, according to
Bloch (2011), it is also a challenge in other countries. A study regarding the District of Columbia school system in the USA found, after controlling for other variables such as a learner’s socio economic status, that learners standardized achievement scores were lower in schools that were overcrowded, they were five percent below schools in fair condition and eleven percent below schools in excellent condition (Edwards, 1992).

Cash (1993) examined the relationship in the US between classroom congestion and learner achievement in small rural areas. Learner scores on achievement tests adjusted for socio-economic status were found to be up to five percentile points lower in buildings with lower quality ratings. It also emerged that achievement appeared to be more directly related to cosmetic factors than structural ones. Poorer achievement was associated with specific building conditions, factors such as air conditioning, locker conditions, classroom furniture and noisy external environments.

The Carnegie Foundation (1988, p.105) report on urban schools concludes that “…the tacit message of the physical indignities in many schools is not lost on students. It speaks of neglect and students’ conduct seems simply to be an extension of the physical environment that surrounds them”. Similarly, Poplin and Weeres (1992) report that, based on an intensive study of teachers, administrators and learners in schools, the depressed physical environment of many schools is believed to reflect society’s lack of priority for children and their education.

Literature dating from the late 1970s argues for the existence of a relationship between class size and students’ academic performance. One of the first major studies to make this assertion vigorously was Glass and Smith’s (1978) article, based on a meta-analysis
of 77 studies dating to the turn of the century from a dozen countries. Glass and Smith (1998) showed that 60% of the comparisons for elementary and secondary students favoured small classes; they asserted, without qualification, that “reduced class size can be expected to produce increased academic achievement.” Rivera-Batiz and Marti (1995) concluded in their research that fewer students passed reading and Mathematics proficiency tests in overcrowded classrooms. When asked, students and teachers in overcrowded schools agreed that overcrowding negatively affected both classroom activities and instructional techniques. Similar questions were examined over the next half century.

Back in 1925, Averill and Mueller observed that children’s reading skills in small classes of 12 increased over those in regular classes (Hollingsworth, 1992). In 1934 Dawe reported that kindergarten class size was unimportant in children’s ability to retain stories, though he noted that children in small classes had greater opportunities to participate in discussion than did those in larger classes (Hollingsworth, 1992). Furthermore, Matea (1997) states that because of classes that are overcrowded teenagers pushed through the jammed hallways to make it to class on time, students could barely get through the bunch line before the bell rang to go back to class. The literature has yet to address properly the effects of class size on “at risk” students. As Slavin (1989: p.108) observes, “We do not know enough at this point to say that simply reducing class size is going to solve the achievement problems of at-risk students; at least not until class size is reduced. The desirability of smaller classes appears to be an “article of faith” among teachers, other members of the educational community and some members of the public. As regards, teacher behaviour, apparently
it varies little with class size (Robinson & Wittebols, 1986; Blatchford and Mortimore, 1994). Where teachers do change their behaviour, the changes are “relatively subtle and unlikely to make important differences in student achievement” (Slavin, 1989: p.106).

Most sophisticated longitudinal studies, however, tend to find that there is a negative connection between increases in class size and student achievement. This argument is supported by Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein and Martini (2003) when they infer that with overcrowded classrooms and only one teacher in the room, the ability for a teacher to help each student individually, or a percentage of the class, is difficult. Children in today’s classroom are not getting the necessary attention they need in order to progress and advance in their education teachers cannot always manage single handedly.

According Shin and Raudenbush (2011) class size is one of the variables in American K-12 Education that is thought to influence student learning. If class sizes are increasing rapidly, how can a student’s learning be positively influenced? This question is the reason why it has been said that students in smaller class of 13-17 have a greater chance of academic achievement (Finn & Achillies, 2003). The reduction of overcrowded classrooms so as to increase academic achievement is a policy option currently of great interest (Jepsen & Rivkin, 2009). This has become a topical subject (Gamoran & Milesi, 2006). Many people from researchers, teacher unions, policy makers, and politicians have debated the benefits and costs of reducing class size while hoping to show positive effects on student achievement.
According to the Harvard statistician Frederic Mosteller (1995), Project Star “Is one of the most important educational investigations ever carried out and illustrates the kind and magnitude of research needed in the field of education to strengthen schools.” Further research has shown that class size has an impact on the two basic literacy skills, reading and spelling (Ecalle, Magnan & Gibert, 2006). This may be attributed to the fact that students in less overcrowded classrooms receive more individual attention from the teacher, the teacher gets to know his/her students better and on a more personal level which helps a teacher plan and accommodate more of a variety of students’ learning needs as opposed to those in an overcrowded classroom where the teacher may struggle to address each student concern and need. This view is supported by Arias and Walker (2004) and Sohn (2010) who argue that there are less disruptions with fewer students as opposed to there being distractions with more learners. This researcher also supports those opinions of Arias and Walker (2004) and Sohn (2010) based on own experience; a teacher with fewer students can communicate better and sooner with any child who may be struggling academically, whereas in a big class with one teacher it takes a lot more time to help everyone. McLeod (2007) argues that increased social interaction is directly related to increased cognitive development.

2.4 Health risks associated with overcrowded classrooms
Manageable class sizes may represent an important psychological factor for teachers in any case. Some studies suggest that because teachers must struggle to simply maintain order in an overcrowded classroom, the likelihood increases that they will suffer from burnout earlier than they might otherwise (Schieber, 1979). Corcoran, Walker and White (1988) concurs with Schieber (1979) when they postulate that overcrowding and
heavy teacher workloads create stressful working conditions and lead to higher teacher absenteeism; the likelihood increases that they will suffer from burnout. Other studies also revealed that crowding has a negative impact on human behaviour and students’ achievement in schools. This was supported by Fin and Achilles (1990), Borland, Howsen and Trawick (2005) and Rivera – Batiz and Marti Francisco (1995), who state that overcrowding in schools contributes to high stress levels experienced by both the teachers and students in overcrowded classrooms.

The office of the Deputy Minister in the United Kingdom, London (May 2004) states that there is good relationship between overcrowding and meningitis. Another study by Baker, McNicholas, Garret, Jones, Stewart, Koberston and Lennon (2000) of Meningococcal disease in New Zealand found that the incident of the diseases was independently associated with overcrowding. It can be inferred therefore, that overcrowding increases the risk of unhealthy stress levels and accidental injury and it can also lead to increased spreading of infectious diseases. The researcher is of the view that schools through their management should address the issue of overcrowding so as to minimize its impact on the health of both teachers and learners.

Gove and Hughes (1983) produced evidence that the relationship of subjective experience of overcrowding to mental health was stronger than the relationship between person per room in another study. UNCHS (1995, p.6) affirm that the transmission of disease increases in overcrowded classrooms; specifically, overcrowding increases the risk of infection as that number of potential transmitters is increased. The
result is that children living in overcrowded conditions get more infections and more severe infections.

Research indicates that the quality of air inside state schools facilities may significantly affect students’ ability to concentrate. The evidence therefore suggests that youth, especially those under ten of age years are more than vulnerable than adults to the types of contaminants found in some schools facilities (Andrews & Neurath, 1988). Several studies suggest that illnesses such as coughing, polio, diarrhoea, meningitis, acute lower respiratory infections, influenza, and stress may be related to overcrowding (Bradley, et al., 1992). In South Africa T.B. presents a problem in schools as it is easily spread in congested rooms. The researcher believes that this in itself is a red flag for the Department of Education.

2.5 Ways and effects of eliminating overcrowding in classrooms
Ijaiya (1999) found that overcrowdedness diminished the quality and quality of teaching and learning with serious implications for attainment of educational goals. It was felt that additional buildings and furniture should give priority in educational planning at all levels.

The desirability of smaller classes appears to be an “article of faith” among teachers, other members of the educational community, and some parts of the public. However, teacher behavior varies little with class size (Blatchford & Mortimore, 1994). Where teachers do change their behavior, the changes are “relatively subtle and unlikely to make important differences in student achievement” (Slavin, 1989: p.106).
By definition, a school is overcrowded when it must operate with an enrolment exceeding its capacity. The impact of overcrowding on student achievement is a complex matter, and is influenced by a variety of other variables, including the steps taken by the school to deal with overcrowding. For instance, schools may absorb increases in enrolment by increasing class size. Surprisingly, research into the impact of class size on the student achievement has been inconclusive: some studies suggest a negative relationship between the two; others suggest a positive relationship. It is also even possible that high student achievement in a particular school may cause overcrowding when class numbers are increased because of its reputation as a desirable school leading to increased enrolment. This could be why not all overcrowded schools have low levels of student achievement.

“Certainly, class sizes should be within reasonable ranges in which the most effective teaching and learning can occur. But in terms of increased pupil learning, research evidence does not justify an absolute limitation on class size or small overall reductions in class size or pupil teacher ratio as a matter of general policy in isolation from the many other factors involved” (Robinson, 1990, pp.80-90).

2.6 Conclusion

Literature review concurred with the view that overcrowding had a negative impact not only on learners’ academic achievement but also on their well-being and resulted in unhealthy stress levels, and diseases like meningitis which can emanate from
classrooms that are overcrowded. The performance of learners is also directly affected because educators do not have a chance to give individual attention, as required.

Infrastructure also has a direct bearing on poor learner performance because classrooms that are congested do not have sufficient ventilation and that affect the lives of learners and teachers. Overcrowding is therefore, an issue that negatively affects learners’ academic achievement. In the next section the methodology used to carry out this study is presented.
CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
In the previous chapter the researcher discussed the literature review linked to the objectives of the study. This chapter deals with the methodology used in the study and the procedures followed in collecting and analyzing data. It also discusses validity and reliability and ethical considerations. Hence it is essential to explain why the researcher has chosen the specific method and to describe his entire research strategy and tactics (Blanche & Durrheim, 2004).

3.2 Research design
A research design is a detailed description of the procedures that the researcher uses to investigate the topic or the problem. It includes justification for the hypotheses or exploration of posed research questions and a detailed presentation of the research steps to be followed in collecting, choosing and analysing data (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001: p.166), “...a research design refers to a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research question.” It shows which individuals will be studied, when and under which circumstances they will be studied”. Mrazek (1993: p.42) also defines research design” “...as a plan to use one or more techniques to collect desired observations or data in the observed manner”. In short, a research design is the researcher’s plan of how to proceed with the investigation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).
Research decisions are not only about what overall type of design to use, but also about sampling sources and procedures for collecting data, measurement issues and data analysis plans (De Vos, 1998). Designing a study involves specifying exactly who or what is to be studied, when, how and for what purpose (Babbie, 2001). The researcher used the deductive-quantitative design as deductive-quantitative designs are usually more structured quantitative method. Also, quantitative research methods are usually associated with deductive approaches (based on logic) (van Wyk, n.d.)

3.3 Quantitative research approach
Patton (1990, p.165) points out “the advantage of the quantitative approach is that it is possible to measure the reactions of many subjects to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of data”. Researchers who use logical positivism or quantitative research employ experimental methods and quantitative measures to test hypothetical generalizations (Hoepfl, 1997), and they also emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). To illustrate the meaning of quantitative research for its use of explaining social problems, Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p.4) note:

Charts and graphs illustrate the results of the research, and commentators employ words such as ‘variables’, ‘populations’ and ‘result’ as part of their daily vocabulary...even if we do not always know just what all of the terms mean...[but] we know that this is part of the process of doing research. Research, then as it comes to be known publicly, is a synonym for quantitative research.
3.3.1 Justification for a Quantitative Approach
Quantitative research allows the researcher to familiarize him/herself with the problem or concept to be studied, and perhaps generate hypotheses to be tested. In this paradigm: (1) the emphasis is on facts and causes of behaviour (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), (2) the information is in the form of numbers that can be quantified and summarized, (3) the mathematical process is the norm for analysing the numeric data and (4) the final result is expressed in statistical terminologies (Charles, 1995). Patton (1990) asserts that it is the research question or goal that should dictate which methodology is appropriate. In this study the researcher opted for the quantitative approach.

3.4 Population, sample and sampling technique

3.4.1 Population
Population is the large group of people at a research site; it constitutes a set of elements that have similar characteristic to which a researcher may generalize his/her results (Maree, 2007). The district where the study was conducted has 215 schools which are grouped into eight circuits. Three schools were selected through using stratified random sampling. In each of the selected schools a principal, five educators and ten learners were making a total of 48 participants.

3.4.2 Sample and sampling techniques
McMillan and Schumacher (2001: p.175) are of the opinion that on the basis of the researcher’s knowledge of the population, a judgment can be made about which subject can provide the best information to address the purpose of the research.
According to Borg and Gall (1989, p.216) sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. If sampling is done properly, the researcher can reach conclusions about an entire target population that are likely to be correct within a small margin of error by studying a relatively small sample. Sample size refers to the “number of subjects” to be used for the collection of the required data for the study. This can be selected from a group of subjects from whom data will be collected (McMillan & Schumacher 2001: p.169). According to Tuckman (1994: p.309), respondents are the number of people who will participate in the study, how they will be selected and their characteristics. Providing this kind of information makes it possible for other researchers to select a virtually identical sample if they choose to replicate the study.

To make the study more manageable in terms of time and finance three schools were selected because of their proximity to the researcher. The researcher sampled three Junior Secondary Schools from the Maluti District that is, schools A, B and C. Three school principals from sampled schools were given questionnaires. Five Junior School educators were selected from each sampled school. The total number of sampled educators was 15 and was given questionnaires and ten learners were selected in each sampled school. Thus a sample of three (3) principals, fifteen (15) educators and thirty (30) learners from overcrowded Junior Secondary Schools were given questionnaires and they were asked to respond to the statements.
The educators were chosen because they were directly involved in teaching learners in overcrowded classrooms every day, so they knew exactly how learners behaved in that situation. The principals were chosen because they supervised educators either on a weekly or daily bases depending on their supervisory routine and some of the principals were subject teachers so they were used to the situation on daily basis.

Learners were chosen because they are the ones whose performance was affected negatively. The questionnaire was the data-gathering instrument through which respondents answered questions or responded to statements. Questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher to educators and learners. The researcher had the opportunity to establish rapport, explained the purpose of the study and the meaning of the items that may not have been clear (Best & Kahn 1993, pp.230-231).

3.5 Research instruments

Questionnaires were designed for principals, educators and learners. The aim of the instrument was to determine the impact overcrowding had on learner performance. A questionnaire is a purposeful interaction between two or more people focused on one person trying to get information from another person. Questionnaires permit researchers to obtain important data which they cannot acquire from observation. These questionnaires were designed to enable the respondents to respond to the statements in the questionnaire (Vockell, 1983: pp.86-87).
3.5.1 Validity and reliability of instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure. A measure or instrument is said to be valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure (Maree, 2007: p.147). According to Babbie (1992: p.132) reliability is a matter whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time.

3.6 Pilot study

The instruments were validated by conducting a pilot study, whose aims were:

- To test the sustainability of the question asked in the instruments
- To find whether the questions were clear and understood by learners
- To test whether the Questions were well structured and in line with the attainment of objectives of the study. Leedy and Ormrod (2010: p.29) define reliability as “a consistency with which a measuring instrument yield a certain result when the entity being measured has not changed”. The reliability of a questionnaire was tested by informally asking five learners who were not selected for the study to check if they could reasonably respond to the questionnaire in line with the general expectations.

Guidelines for the drawing up of acceptable questionnaires as suggested by Leedy (1993: pp. 188-189) were used, namely:

- Courtesy (using appealing language).
- Simplicity (question should be simple to read and respond to).
• Face general issues (rather than addressing specific or personal issues).

  Brevity (questionnaires to be brief and should solicit only data essential to the research project).

Three different questionnaires were compiled; one for each of the chosen respondents – principals, teachers and learners using the Likert Measurement Scale. Respondents were asked to respond to the statements. They were requested to rate their responses using the following rating scale: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neutral (N); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

3.7 Data collection procedure for main study
The researcher used the improved questionnaire after a pilot study to gather information on the impact of overcrowding in classrooms on learner performance. The instruments were administered to grade 9 learners who were willing to participate and whose parents had signed the consent forms. The questions were put to the respondents who, in turn, responded. These principals, educators and learners were asked to respond to questionnaires.

3.8 Ethical considerations
In this research ethical issues pertaining to the respondents in terms of permission, informed consent, and right of participants, confidentiality and anonymity were taken into account. These included permission from participants, informed consent, rights of participants, confidentiality and anonymity.
• **Permission**: White (2005) suggests that ethics are generally considered to deal with beliefs about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad. The researcher requested a recognition letter from Walter Sisulu University in the Faculty of Education. This was taken to the district offices where the schools chosen for the study were situated for written permission to conduct the study.

• **Informed Consent**: Obtaining informed consent implies that adequate information on the goal of the investigation and procedures are followed during the investigation. The possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers, to which respondents may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, were rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives (Babbie, 1998). The researcher asked the participants to give consent. Participants were at liberty to withdraw from the investigation at any time of the study.

• **Rights of participants**: Participants were protected from unwarranted physical and mental discomfort, distress, harm, danger or deprivation (Babbie, 1986). White (2005) suggests that respondents in a research project should be allowed to exercise their right to be part of the research or not. The researcher requested the respondents to participate voluntarily.

• **Confidentiality**: Confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner. Cohen and Manion (1989: p.24) view confidentiality as a continuation of privacy “which refers to agreements between persons that limit other’s access to private information.” All the information obtained in this study was treated confidentially and was not divulged to anyone.
• **Anonymity**: Information given anonymously ensured the privacy of the subjects. It is often necessary that respondents be identified, for instance when reminders have to be sent to persons who have not responded (Scott, 1996). The structured questionnaires did not request respondents to divulge personal information.

3.9 Conclusion
This chapter has provided the research methodology and design to situate the investigative research study in its proper and relevant context. By so doing, the researcher identified the need to discern a relevant methodological choice, design and application because this was the most important part of the research study guiding the whole process to a successful conclusion. Through the methodological application, the study produced data from which findings could be deduced and recommendations made. In this way, solutions to the problems could be identified and the recommendations could be used to resolve them.
4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the primary data statistically in the form of tables and graphs followed by a brief interpretation of what the data revealed. The primary data were collected from 3 principals, 15 educators and 30 learners. Data were collected from these respondents through the use of questionnaires. The aim of the presentation of the collected data by tables and graphs for the analysis and interpretation was to answer the main and subsidiary research questions upon which the main data collection statements were based:

The main research question for the investigation was: What are the effects of overcrowding in classrooms on learner performance in selected schools in Maluti District, Eastern Cape Province? To be able to provide pertinent answers to the main research question, the following subsidiary questions guided the researcher in the preparation of the questionnaire item statement.

4.1.1 Subsidiary research questions as presented in 1.1.6

1. How does overcrowding affect teachers’ effectiveness and efficiency in terms of performance in teaching?

2. How does overcrowding affect learner performance?

3. What are the health risks related to overcrowding in classrooms?
4. What can be done to eliminate overcrowding and its effects in classrooms?

The analyses were presented systematically in tables and graphs, beginning with the questionnaire items for principals, educators and learners. The data treatment through the use of tallying yielded the results represented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

4.2 Principals responses and interpretation to statements
The table below is the summary of the tallied responses from the three (03) principals’ questionnaire items. The graphical representation and interpretation follow the table.

Table 1: Scores for questionnaire responses from principals (N = 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Overcrowding in classrooms affects learner performance.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There are health risks related to overcrowded classrooms.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inadequate school facilities have an impact on learning.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Overcrowding has impact on learners’ behaviour.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Overcrowding results in learner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
physical indignity.

6. Overcrowding reflects society’s lack of priority for children and their education.

7. Overcrowding results in neglect or capacity on the part of the learners.

8. Overcrowding affects both classroom activities and instructional methods.

9. Overcrowding results in learners’ aggression in classrooms.

10. Overcrowding in classrooms results in teachers’ lack of concentration.

11. Overcrowding in classrooms creates stressful working conditions.

12. Overcrowding in classrooms increases the possibility of accidents and injury.

13. Instances of infectious diseases in
overcrowded classrooms is rife.

14. Learner welfare in terms of 2 academic progress is at risk in overcrowded classrooms.

15. Officials and educators cannot 0 protect learners’ safety in overcrowded classrooms.

16. Monitoring of learners work in 0 overcrowded classrooms is impossible.

17. Efficiency and effectiveness of 1 teachers’ activities cannot be achieved in overcrowded classrooms.


19. Parents are not in a position to solve the problem overcrowded classrooms.

20. Teachers have to work in overcrowded classrooms in their
Evidence in Table 1 reveals that overcrowding in classrooms affects learner performance. The reason might be that learners are not able to pay attention when in a large group. Furthermore, the educator cannot move freely to reach individual learners who may need attention and besides that, there may be too many who need help. What can be indicated here is that in the case of infectious diseases, these can spread quickly among the learners in the class because of close proximity to each other. It can be seen that inadequacy of facilities is another contributing factor of overcrowding in classrooms. When a school does not have sufficient infrastructure such as classrooms, overcrowding impacts negatively on learning as indicated in other items in the questionnaire. Generally, as revealed in Table 1, overcrowding has an impact on learner behaviour.

The impact can range from fighting, shouting and even physical abuse by learners. Such a situation in an overcrowded classroom results in the educator spending more time on discipline than on teaching. The teachers also need to raise their voices.

Table 1 reveals that overcrowding results in learner physical indignity and for this reason the learner may concentrate on challenging other learners to restore dignity which may create enmity among them thereby limiting cooperation among learners. For example, sitting very close together on benches or on the floor can create irritation because of the lack of space, talking and having others seeing one’s work.

Evidence from Table 1 shows that overcrowding reflects society’s lack of priority for children and their education. Such a situation militates against the progress of learners.
in such school environment. Overcrowding results in neglect or apathy on the part of
the learners because they compete for the limited space at the expense of their school
work, especially when the teacher is teaching too many learners in one room and
cannot be vigilant. It is clear in terms of the effects that overcrowding has on both
classroom activities and instructional methods.

The educator is always under pressure in terms of class control and giving instruction
during the delivery of lesson. Generally, in any environment where space is contested,
aggression is eminent. From Figure 9 the evidence is clear that overcrowding in
classrooms results in learners developing aggressive behaviour in terms of contestation
for the limited space. In this way it is the fittest who occupies ample space at the
expense of weaker learners.

Evidence from Table 1 shows that overcrowding in classrooms does not affect learners
only; it affects the teacher’s concentration during the delivery of lessons. The reason is
that the teacher may shift attention from teaching to calming the situation in the
classroom if learners engage in fighting or an exchange of words. Such a situation
prevents the teacher from concentrating on the delivery of the lesson.

Generally, under normal environmental condition in societies, overcrowding creates
stressful conditions for occupants. As revealed in Table 1 overcrowding classrooms
create stressful working conditions for both teachers and learners. This in turn has
adverse effects on both teacher and learner performance. Evidence also shows that
overcrowding classroom increases possibility of accidents and such a situation may be
stressful to both the teacher and the learner making teaching and learning ineffective because the teacher and the learner need to concentrate on their security instead of on the lesson being delivered.

It is generally evident that where there is overcrowding, the spread of infectious diseases is very rapid, and for that reason, should there be carriers of infectious diseases in the classroom, the effect can be fatal in terms of the risks posed to learners. South Africa has a high T.B rate and some strains are resistant to drugs. The evidence is that learner welfare in terms of academic progress is always at risk in overcrowded classroom. The result is that if learner welfare cannot be guaranteed there is every possibility that learning and teaching cannot be effective, placing learners at risk in terms of their performance.

There is also an absolute indication that education officials and educators cannot protect learners’ safety in overcrowded classrooms. In fact in all environments where safety cannot be guaranteed, inhabitants are almost always at risk. In a classroom situation such a feeling will have serious adverse effect on learners’ performance. Since space is limited which might impede the movement of the teacher in the classroom, it is possible, as revealed that monitoring of learners’ work in overcrowded classroom is practically impossible. This in turn will have an adverse effect on learners’ performance.

Shown also is that if the teacher cannot move freely in the classroom and spends most of the time on discipline to calm tempers of the learners then efficiency and effectiveness of the teacher’s activities leave much to be desired. This cannot be
blamed entirely on the teacher being inefficient and ineffective but on the physical environment with which the teacher is faced. Principals cannot do anything about overcrowded classrooms. It is not the principal who provides the infrastructural requirement of schools and for that matter has not control whatsoever in terms of the condition that may prevail in an overcrowded school environment.

Table 1 further indicates that just as the principals cannot do anything about overcrowded classrooms, parents are even less able to do so because they are not even part of the immediate environment where learners are grouped in classrooms. The best possible contribution they could make is to send petitions to the powers that be to look into the situation of overcrowded classrooms’ in their location. Lastly, it is shown that teachers who are posted to schools where overcrowding is a phenomenon, they would have no alternative but to work in such a classroom environment. Teachers would have to devise their own coping strategies in classrooms.

4.3 Educators responses and interpretation of statements

The following figures represent educators’ responses to the questionnaire items.

**Questionnaire item 1:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowded classrooms are an indication of lack of infrastructural provisions. The responses are represented in Figure 1.
From Figure 1, the evidence is that overcrowded classroom is an indication of lack of infrastructural provision in schools in the area under study.

**Questionnaire item 2:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowded classrooms affect instructional methods and classroom activities. The responses are represented in Figure 2.
Figure 2: Overcrowded classrooms affect instructional methods and classroom activities

The response from the respondents as reflected in Figure 2 confirms the statement that overcrowded classrooms affect instructional methods and classroom activities. The reason is that lack of space for a teacher’s movements when attempting to give individual attention and to monitor learners work impacts negatively on effectiveness and efficiency.

Questionnaire item 3: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowded classrooms affect learners’ performance. The responses are represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Overcrowded classroom affects learner’s performance

Figure 3 confirms the statement that overcrowded classroom affects learners’ performance. The implication is that learners who are cramped for space find it hard to concentrate or get the teachers’ attention. It may also lead to rowdiness which the teacher has to control thereby affecting instructional time and the flow of lesson in terms of content being delivered.
**Questionnaire item 4:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Learner welfare is at risk in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 4.

![Figure 4: Learner welfare is at risk in overcrowded classrooms](image)

**Figure 4: Learner welfare is at risk in overcrowded classrooms**

Figure 4 reveals that learner welfare is not served in overcrowded classrooms. As indicated previously, learners’ jostle-push and shove for the limited space, generally there are interruptions, lack of attention and poor performance. Furthermore, due to the overcrowding there is a possibility of infection should and for this reason learner wellbeing is at risk.

**Questionnaire item 5:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowding affects learners’ ability to concentrate. The responses are represented in Figure 5.
Interpretation: Evidence from Figure 5 reveals that overcrowding affects learners’ ability to concentrate during the delivery of a lesson by the teacher. The implication is that instead of learners concentrating on the instruction the teacher is giving, they are distracted by those close by in the classroom. This may lead to rowdiness which the teacher has to control thereby affecting instructional time and learners’ concentration as well as the flow of teaching in terms of content of the lesson being delivered. Overcrowding in classrooms is not conducive to good performance.

Questionnaire item 6: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Aggression of learners is evident in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 6
Interpretation: Psychological evidence in terms of aggression by people occupying limited spaces has been proved (Boaduo et al., 2011). The evidence from Figure 6 is a confirmation of this fact that aggression of learners is evident in overcrowded classrooms. The reason is that they fighting and pushing in for limited spaces is inevitable and affects concentration on the lesson the teacher is delivering.

Questionnaire item 7: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Educators have little control of learners in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 7.
Interpretation: Evidence from figure 7 confirms the issue of class control and management during the delivery of a lesson. The implication is that educators may have to spend their time calming down the class and resolving petty issues instead of concentrating on the delivery of the lesson at hand. In this way, educators may lose control of the class because of overcrowding.

Questionnaire item 8: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Educators spend more time controlling learners than teaching in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 28.

Figure 8: Educators spend more time controlling learners in overcrowded classrooms than teaching.

Interpretation: Lesson delivery success depends on class control and management. Figure 8 reveals that in overcrowded classrooms educators may spend more time controlling learners’ rowdiness instead of delivering the lesson. In this way, instructional time is lost and learners lose lesson content which may have adverse effects on their performance.
**Questionnaire item 9:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowded classrooms contribute to learner absenteeism. The responses are represented in Figure 9.

![Pie chart showing responses to Questionnaire item 9](image)

**Figure 9: Overcrowded classrooms contribute to learner absenteeism.**

**Interpretation:** Evidence from literature in the field of psychology (Boaduo et al., 2011) reveals that people absent themselves from environments which are overcrowded. Figure 9 confirms the observation by Boaduo et al. (2011) and for this reason it can be confirmed that overcrowded classrooms contribute to learners’ absenteeism in schools.

**Questionnaire item 10:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowded classroom contributes to learners’ inability to follow educator’s instructions when teaching. The responses are represented in figure 10.
Interpretation: As indicated already psychological evidence in terms of loss of concentration by people occupying limited spaces has been proved (Boaduo et al, 2011). The evidence from Figure 10 is a confirmation of this fact; that overcrowded classrooms contribute to learners’ inability to follow instruction. The reason may be that learners fight for the limited spaces in the classroom instead of concentrating on the lesson the teacher is delivering.

4.4 Learners responses and interpretation to statements
In the ensuing section the graphical representation and interpretation summarizes responses from the learners’ questionnaire items.

Questionnaire item 1: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: As a learner overcrowding in the classroom is not good for me. The responses are represented in figure 11.

Figure 10: Overcrowded classroom contributes to learners’ inability to follow educator’s instructions when teaching.
Figure 11: As a learner, overcrowding in the classroom is not good for me.

**Interpretation:** Overcrowding as a social phenomenon is not good for the inhabitants in overcrowded areas. Figure 11 reveals that learners in overcrowded classrooms know that the condition is not good for them. Overcrowding can affect their levels of responsibility, be a recipe for aggressive behaviour and reduce concentration levels during lessons. It is therefore crucial that something must be done about this phenomenon in schools where it exists.

**Questionnaire item 2:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowding in the classroom creates an environment for quarrelling. The responses are represented in Figure 12.
Figure 12: Overcrowding in the classroom creates an environment for quarrelling.

**Interpretation:** Figure 12 reflects on the fact that overcrowding in classrooms creates a situation where learners quarrel about the small available space. In so doing they fail to concentrate on the lesson that the teacher is teaching. Furthermore, in such overcrowded classroom, the teacher has to spend a considerable part of the instructional time in class controlling and maintaining discipline thus leaving less time for lesson content teaching or facilitating learners work.

**Questionnaire item 13:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowding in the classroom does not give one space to do ones work properly. The responses are represented in Figure 13.

![Figure 13: Overcrowding in the classrooms does not give one space to do ones work properly.](image)

**Figure 13:** Overcrowding in the classroom does not give one space to do ones work properly.

**Interpretation:** Generally, when classrooms are overcrowded, there is little or no space for free movement of learners. Figure 13 supports this claim that overcrowding in
classrooms does not give learners ample space to do their work properly. This may affect their general performance at the end of the school year.

**Questionnaire item 4:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: There is always noise in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 14.

![Figure 14](image)

**Figure 14:** There is always noise in overcrowded classrooms.

**Interpretation:** In any environment where overcrowding is the phenomenon, there is always noise, particularly in the classroom situation where learners are supposed to interact in order to be able to share ideas and experiences. Noise, on the other hand, impacts on hearing what the teacher is talking about leaving learners unable to follow the progress of the lesson the teacher is teaching.

**Questionnaire item 5:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Teachers cannot give individual attention in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 15.
Figure 15: Teachers cannot give individual attention in overcrowded classrooms.

Interpretation: In any normal classroom, the teacher is able to spend time with learners who may need individual attention; however, as revealed in Figure 15, teachers cannot give individual learners attention because all of them would be waiting for their turn. Teachers cannot accomplish their objectives successfully.

Questionnaire item 6: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Learners in overcrowded classrooms can easily get infections from other learners. The responses are represented in Figure 16.
Figure 16: Learners in overcrowded classrooms can easily get infections from other learners.

Interpretation: Infection and contagious diseases are easily spread in an overcrowded environment. For this reason, if classrooms are overcrowded the possibility of infectious diseases spreading to other learners is very high and may compromise their health in a negative way.

Questionnaire item 17: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Learners are not able to move freely in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 17.
Figure 17: Learners are not able to move freely in overcrowded classrooms.

Interpretation: A limited environment impedes free movement. As can be observed from Figure 17, learners generally cannot move freely in overcrowded classrooms. The issue of restriction in movement breeds a quarrelsome atmosphere and to rowdy behaviour when learners’ movement is restricted.

Questionnaire item 8: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: There is always competition for space in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 18.
Figure 18: There is always competition for space in overcrowded classrooms.

Interpretation: Overcrowding is the result of available limited space in an environment. In Figure 18 the evidence is that there is always competition among learners for the limited space in the overcrowded classroom. This kind of competition usually results in rowdiness, aggression and fighting among the learners.

Questionnaire item 9: This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Learners always fight for seating space in overcrowded classrooms. The responses are represented in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Learners always fight for seating space in overcrowded classrooms.

Interpretation: If a school does not have sufficient classrooms then there is the possibility of not having other resources. As revealed in Figure 19 learners will always fight for seating space. Overcrowding is also the result of limited available space in an environment. The evidence is that there is always competition among learners for the
limited space including seating in the overcrowded classroom. This kind of competition usually results in rowdiness, aggression and quarrelling among the learners which the teacher has to deal with.

**Questionnaire item 10:** This item requested the respondents to respond to the statement: Overcrowded classroom does not promote friendship among learners. The responses are represented in Figure 20.

![Overcrowded classroom does not promote friendship among learners](image)

**Figure 20:** Overcrowded classroom do not promote friendship among learners.

**Interpretation:** Overcrowding is the result of available limited space in an environment and such an environment breeds aggression and rowdiness. In Figure 20 the evidence is that there is always competition among learners for the limited space and seats in the classroom. As a result of such competition, friendship among learners deteriorates rapidly and this impacts negatively on learners’ human relations. Generally, overcrowding is a social phenomenon, but when applied to the classroom where teaching and learning takes place, the impact on learners’ performance is negative.
4.5 **Discussions of the findings**
The researcher finds it important to present the main research question and the objectives of the study in this chapter before the findings are discussed. The research title reads thus: *Perceptions of Junior Secondary School Educators and Learners on the Effects of Overcrowding in Classrooms on Learner Performance in Maluti District, Eastern Cape Province*. The following findings emerged after data analysis.

**The objectives of this study were to:**

1. Determine ways through which overcrowding affect teachers’ effectiveness and efficiency in terms of performance in teaching.

2. Establish how overcrowding affect learner performance.

3. Identify the health risks related to overcrowding in classrooms.

4. Establish what can be done to eliminate overcrowding and its effects in classrooms.

4.5.1 **Ways through which overcrowding affect teachers’ effectiveness and efficiency in terms of performance in teaching**

Through the study the researcher established the three main problems of overcrowding.

Firstly, the level of noise naturally increases in overcrowded classrooms. It becomes harder for learners to concentrate and harder for the teachers to teach. When teachers have to shout over noise to teach, much of the lesson is lost because of how much time is wasted and this creates stressful working conditions and a high rate of
absenteeism. Secondly, there is less individualized focus when there are more learners, teachers cannot spend the same amount of the time with each learner. If a student is struggling, there is not enough time to help him/her. Sometimes a teacher may not notice the learner struggling or may not have the time to give him/her the help. Thirdly, more people mean various levels of intelligence to deal with, the pace of the lesson is affected and there are distractions. This confirms Khan and Iqbal’s (2012) submission that the classroom is the most important area within a school. The students spend most of their time, hopefully in an environment conducive to learning. The entire design of classroom reflects the priorities, goals, philosophy, personality and teaching style of the student. Student learning behavior can be enhanced when teachers take time to create a classroom climate in which adolescents feel comfortable with their teachers and peers. But unfortunately, in our country the classrooms are overcrowded.

Teachers are uncertain about how to relate to the learners and still maintain discipline. Teachers lack knowledge regarding the effective use of alternatives to corporal punishment and the use of power to establish teacher authority. This contradicts the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, section 11 (2) dictates that, discipline should be corrective and nurturing. In managing discipline in the classroom teachers have to remove any form of punishment harmful to learners’ self-esteem. This implies that physical punishment as well as emotional castigation has no place in the classroom. The teacher has to discern what is best for his/her large class. This corroborates findings in the field of psychology (Boaduo et al., 2011) which reveals that people absent themselves from environments which are overcrowded and for this reason it can be confirmed that overcrowded classrooms contribute to learners’ absenteeism in schools.
Overcrowding in classrooms makes the job of controlling learners difficult. It was reported of the difficult to move around in overcrowded classrooms and establish a relationship of trust with the learners. It was also difficult for the teachers to establish their authority without the assistance from the School Management Team. Unfortunately some teachers were beginning to lose hope because they were unable to manage their classes without help. Teachers in different schools noted that self-discipline was lacking, this was reflected in learners not doing their homework. Lack of self-discipline also seemed to using bad language and being very rude and disrespectful. According to teachers self-discipline has to be taught at home by parents.

Lowe (1990) confirms that buildings in poor and overcrowded condition have a negative impact upon the learning climate and that results of poor learners’ performance, the size and organisation of instructional space are reported to have an influence upon learning climate. According to teachers, most of their teaching time was spent dealing with learners’ misconduct. They actually spent more time on disciplinary problems than on teaching and helping individual learners. Every day they deal with cases of bunking the lessons, coming late to classes and fighting in the classrooms. Lack of supervision and control seemed to contribute to learners misconduct as learners had to be supervised all the time; leaving them to work on their own caused many problems.

It was impossible in overcrowded classrooms to give learners extra work, because they quickly realised that the teachers’ workload did not give him/her a chance to supervise any extra work. This is consistent with Carlson (2000) who reported that that
quality learning was not possible when large number of students were packed into small classrooms.

4.5.2 Effects of overcrowding on learner performance

Overcrowding of classrooms occurs for many reasons; but for whatever reasons, the results are a cause of concern for both the learners and educators. Learners in overcrowded classrooms do as well in achievement tests as students in less crowded classrooms. The type and kind of educational programmes offered in an overcrowded classroom also directly affects the performance of a learner because of the extreme pressure that is exerted upon all of the facilities and areas that teachers and learners need to use for an effective educational programme.

Rivera-Batiz and Marti (1995) report that overcrowding in the classrooms negatively affects both classroom activities and instructional techniques. Close to 40% of the students reported that they have problems concentrating in their classes when learning something new. Educators reported that they had only time to cover the basic material and did not have any time for further exploration. There is no individual attention given to slow learners and that directly affect their performance. An excellent study completed by the Department of Health services in California (1981) investigated the relationship between students’ performance and classroom noise. It was discovered that students in less crowded and quieter classrooms did considerably better in reading scores than students in noisy overcrowded classrooms. Based upon these results the conclusion was reached that a negative relationship exists between classroom noise level and learner performance.
This study aptly demonstrates the negative effect of unwanted noise in the overcrowded classroom. The findings substantiated the view that to hear is to understand better what is being said it is a prerequisite for effective learning. When the students’ ability to hear and understand is impaired through unwanted noise students do not perform well. The learners in the schools where this study was undertaken were not performing well.

4.5.3 Health risks related to overcrowding in classrooms

Learners are easily infected with diseases in overcrowded classrooms. These infectious diseases account for millions of school days lost each year. 40% of the children aged 5-17 years of age miss three (3) or more days each year because of illness or injury. Nearly two thousand school days are lost each year due to colds alone while five thousand school days are lost each year due to influenza virus. Overcrowded classrooms result in a fast the transmission rate of infections from learner to learners because of learners being in close contact and sharing supplies and equipment.

4.5.4 What can be done to eliminate overcrowding and its effects in classrooms

It was felt that additional buildings and furniture should give priority in educational planning at all levels. Respondents were of the view that since the numbers of learners to schools were likely to be on the rise for a foreseeable future, it was only logical to add more classrooms to improve the current high teacher-pupil ratios. This was like to enhance learning. Ijaiya (1999) found that over crowdedness diminished the quality and
The quality of teaching and learning with serious implications for attainment of educational goals.

It was also established that declining standards of classrooms put the affected learners at the disadvantage of learning well, and were most likely going to perform poorly. In the same vein, increasing the supply of quality teachers was also observed as a measure that could be used to improve pass rates. Teachers were also noted to have the need to be creative and effective in their work places. This is supported by Nemra (2006) who reported that because of large number of students in class, the teachers would not be able to give extra attention to the weak students. Khan and Elixir (2012) recommended that the number of students in each class should be limited to 35 – 40 students. Also, government should plan strict rules and policies regarding optimum population in classrooms and provide sufficient budget to education department for providing better facilities in schools.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided the analysis and interpretation of the primary data collected through the administration of questionnaires to the sampled respondents. The conclusion that could be drawn from the revelations from the responses is that overcrowded classrooms do not promote learning, have an adverse effect on learners’ interpersonal relationships, breed aggression and rowdiness and impacts negatively on learner ability to concentrate. On the part of the teacher much of instructional time is
wasted on class control and management and the teacher is not able to provide individual learners’ needs as a whole or move around the room to keep a watchful eye.
CHAPTER 5

5. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
Having revisited the objectives, the researcher summarizes the study, outlines the implications of the challenges of the study and thereafter recommendations are made followed by suggestions for further studies and a conclusion completes the chapter.

5.2 Summary of the study
5.2.1 Sub-research question 1

Principals, educators and learners indicated that inadequacy of facilities emerged as another contributing factor of overcrowding in classrooms. Overcrowding also has an impact on learner behaviour. The impact can range from fighting, shouting and even physical abuse by learners. Such a situation an overcrowded classroom results in the educator spending more time on discipline than on teaching. The teachers also need to raise their voices. The educator is always under pressure in terms of class control and giving instruction during the delivery of lesson. Generally, in any environment where space is contested, aggression is eminent. Overcrowding in classrooms results in learners developing aggressive behaviour in terms of contestation for the limited space. In this way it is the fittest who occupies ample space at the expense of weaker learners.

Respondents also pointed out that overcrowding in classrooms does not affect learners only; it affects the teacher’s concentration during the delivery of lessons. The reason is that the teacher may shift attention from teaching to calming the situation in the
classroom if learners engage in fighting or an exchange of words. Such a situation prevents the teacher from concentrating on the delivery of the lesson.

Overcrowding classrooms further create stressful working conditions for both teachers and learners. This in turn has adverse effects on both teacher and learner performance. The evidence is that learner welfare in terms of academic progress is always at risk in overcrowded classroom. The result is that if learner welfare cannot be guaranteed there is every possibility that learning and teaching cannot be effective, placing learners at risk in terms of their performance. There is also an absolute indication that education officials and educators cannot protect learners’ safety in overcrowded classrooms. In fact in all environments where safety cannot be guaranteed, inhabitants are almost always at risk. In a classroom situation such a feeling will have serious adverse effect on learners’ performance.

Since space is limited which might impede the movement of the teacher in the classroom, it is possible, as revealed that monitoring of learners’ work in overcrowded classroom is practically impossible. This in turn will have an adverse effect on learners’ performance. Educators indicated that overcrowded classrooms affect instructional methods and classroom activities. The reason is that lack of space for a teacher’s movements when attempting to give individual attention and to monitor learners work impacts negatively on effectiveness and efficiency. Lesson delivery success depends on class control and management. In overcrowded classrooms educators may spend more time controlling learners’ rowdiness instead of delivering the lesson. In this way, instructional time is lost and learners lose lesson content which may have adverse effects on their performance.
Learners highlighted that overcrowding in classrooms creates a situation where learners quarrel about the small available space. In so doing they fail to concentrate on the lesson that the teacher is teaching. Furthermore, in such overcrowded classroom, the teacher has to spend a considerable part of the instructional time in class controlling and maintaining discipline thus leaving less time for lesson content teaching or facilitating learners work. In any environment where overcrowding is the phenomenon, there is always noise, particularly in the classroom situation where learners are supposed to interact in order to be able to share ideas and experiences. Noise, on the other hand, impacts on hearing what the teacher is talking about leaving learners unable to follow the progress of the lesson the teacher is teaching.

5.2.2 Sub-research question 2

Results revealed that overcrowding in classrooms affects learner performance. The reason might be that learners are not able to pay attention when in a large group. Furthermore, the educator cannot move freely to reach individual learners who may need attention and besides that, there may be too many who need help. Overcrowding also results in learner physical indignity and for this reason the learner may concentrate on challenging other learners to restore dignity which may create enmity among them thereby limiting cooperation among learners. For example, sitting very close together on benches or on the floor can create irritation because of the lack of space, talking and having others seeing one’s work.

More so, overcrowding reflects society’s lack of priority for children and their education. Such a situation militates against the progress of learners in such school environment. Overcrowding results in neglect or apathy on the part of the learners because they
compete for the limited space at the expense of their school work, especially when the teacher is teaching too many learners in one room and cannot be vigilant. Overcrowded classroom affects learners’ performance. The implication is that learners who are cramped for space find it hard to concentrate or get the teachers’ attention. It may also lead to rowdiness which the teacher has to control thereby affecting instructional time and the flow of lesson in terms of content being delivered.

Overcrowding also affect learners’ ability to concentrate during the delivery of a lesson by the teacher. This may lead to rowdiness which the teacher has to control thereby affecting instructional time and learners’ concentration as well as the flow of teaching in terms of content of the lesson being delivered. Overcrowding in classrooms is not conducive to good performance.

Learners pointed out that overcrowding as a social phenomenon is not good for them. Overcrowding can affect their levels of responsibility, be a recipe for aggressive behaviour and reduce concentration levels during lessons. Competition among learners for the limited space and seats in the classroom results in rapid deterioration of friendship among learners and this impacts negatively on learners’ human relations. When overcrowding is applied to the classroom where teaching and learning takes place, the impact on learners’ performance is negative.

5.2.3 Sub-research question 3

Principals indicated that in the case of infectious diseases, these can spread quickly among the learners in the class because of close proximity to each other. Also overcrowding classroom increases possibility of accidents and such a situation may be
stressful to both the teacher and the learner making teaching and learning ineffective because the teacher and the learner need to concentrate on their security instead of on the lesson being delivered. It is generally evident that where there is overcrowding, the spread of infectious diseases is very rapid, and for that reason, should there be carriers of infectious diseases in the classroom, the effect can be fatal in terms of the risks posed to learners. South Africa has a high T.B rate and some strains are resistant to drugs.

Learner welfare is not served in overcrowded classrooms. As indicated previously, learners jostle-push and shove for the limited space, generally there are interruptions, lack of attention and poor performance. Furthermore, due to the overcrowding there is a possibility of infection should and for this reason learner wellbeing is at risk. Aggression of learners is also more evident in overcrowded classrooms. The reason is that they fighting and pushing in for limited spaces is inevitable and affects concentration on the lesson the teacher is delivering.

5.2.4 Sub-research question 4

From what has been presented in the study report the conclusion that could be drawn is that the impact of overcrowded classrooms in schools has serious implications in terms of learner behaviour, concentration during the delivery of lessons, rude and rowdy behaviour, aggression, noise situation that negatively impacts on learning, diseases that are quickly spread, teachers authority that is compromised, participants revealed that just as the principals cannot do anything about overcrowded
classrooms, parents are even less able to do so because they are not even part of the immediate environment where learners are grouped in classrooms. The best possible contribution they could make is to send petitions to the powers that be to look into the situation of overcrowded classrooms’ in their location, stress levels that are very high and learner performance that is relatively low.

Shown also is that if the teacher cannot move freely in the classroom and spends most of the time on discipline to calm tempers of the learners then efficiency and effectiveness of the teacher’s activities leave much to be desired. This cannot be blamed entirely on the teacher being inefficient and ineffective but on the physical environment with which the teacher is faced. Principals cannot do anything about overcrowded classrooms. It is not the principal who provides the infrastructural requirement of schools and for that matter has not control whatsoever in terms of the conditions that may prevail in an overcrowded school environment. However, they need to liaise with their departmental managers on ways to reduce learner numbers in large classes.

Lastly, it is shown that teachers who are posted to schools where overcrowding is a phenomenon, they would have no alternative but to work in such a classroom environment. Teachers would have to devise their own coping strategies in classrooms. The findings of the study showed that learners performance was being adversely affected by this kind of situation and educators were affected, therefore all the stakeholders in education should play a significant role in addressing the challenge, that is by making sure that enough classrooms are provided in order to ease the
classroom congestion so as to give space for quality teaching and learning to be provided as per the vision of the Department of Education.

5.3 Implications of the study
The focus was on the challenges and problems faced by learners in overcrowded classrooms. The study exposed poor performance by learners in overcrowded classrooms and stressful conditions under which teachers worked. This calls for the Department of Basic Education to inspect and identify schools where overcrowding is a phenomenon and provide additional classrooms to alleviate such conditions.

The parents of the learners must be invited by schools and be informed of the dangers and challenges to which their children are exposed in the overcrowded classrooms through their local structures they can petition Ministry of Education; the first priority of the DOE budget should be for the quick provision of additional classrooms to alleviate the overcrowding in classrooms.

The responses from the learners and teachers indicated that it was difficult to discipline learners who displayed unseemly behaviour in overcrowded classrooms. This must be treated as a societal issue, as the president of the Republic of South Africa, President Zuma correctly puts it. The challenges that threaten education must be responded to immediately and all the basic infrastructure needs must be thoroughly addressed. The implications are far reaching as they impede decent education in state schools.
5.4 Recommendations for practice
This section presents the recommendations based on the findings of the study. These recommendations are also linked to the research questions and objectives of the study.

5.4.1 State budget must be allocated according to the needs
The Department of Education must conduct a feasibility study through relevant sections i.e. supply chain and physical planning sections in this case, where schools will be visited and a needs analysis be done by relevant officials; it is not enough to rely on information on paper before allocating a budget to a particular district. Officials should be in a position to identify these overcrowded classrooms; their report is more likely to influence budget allocation to a particular district. This will save the Department of Education from building structures that become white elephants while leaving schools with large numbers of learners neglected because the information used by either the provincial or the national treasury is influenced by politicians report on hearsay and do not conduct even a basic feasibility study.

5.4.2 Parental involvement in learner discipline
It has been realized that learners lack self discipline, the foundation of which is the home where they are first taught. It is therefore highly recommended that there should be very strong relationships between school and home for learners to be taught that discipline and structure is necessary. Despite the overcrowded conditions, both parents and learners must be aware of the classroom rules that have been made; those must reflect the more general rules that have been outlined in the education policy and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.
5.4.3 Adult to model the correct expected discipline

Overcrowding creates an environment for high stress levels but it is also clear that teachers need to be a living example of the kind of discipline they expect from learners. Some teachers are not models of good behaviour in that they come late for class, some bunk lessons and some use insulting language. Sarcastic remarks by a teacher can arouse feelings of aggression in learners and withdrawal from the teaching-learning situation. Today’s children will not accept a parent or authority figure who does not respect them, Respect has to be earned.

The building of classrooms cannot be done overnight it is the responsibility of all parents and teachers to teach learners that even if they are facing the predicament of learning in an overcrowded school they must have in them the willingness to succeed, despite the environment which they find themselves in.To succeed the school personnel alone cannot solve this problem. As Ngqengelele said ”We need community involvement in order to deal with this scourge” (Ngqengelele, 2006). He is right. Lack of support and help from parents in a serious hindrance to learners’ success. Parents should also teach and encourage learners to succeed and they must also teach their children to accept teacher as their parents in loco-parties.

5.4.4 The Department of education should support teachers in overcrowded classrooms

The Department of Education should assist teachers in improving their lesson planning skills and their learners management skills in overcrowded classrooms because the problem also lies with the approach of teachers to classroom management and learner discipline. Some teachers still use authoritarian teaching and management strategies
which are used in less-overcrowded environments. Most of them were trained within the framework of a segregated education system with affordable and fewer classroom numbers, Re-training to enable them to work effectively in a mass democratic education system with the accompanying challenges of overcrowded classrooms is important.

The researcher believes that if these findings are taken into consideration by the Department of Education and used in the preparation of the annual report to both the Provincial and the National Minister of Education appropriate measures could be put in place to remedy the overcrowded classroom situation in the Maluti schools.

5.4.5 Schools should be instrumental in keeping their learners safe

Overcrowding is characterized by the spread of diseases schools should be instrumental in keeping their environments safe and healthy by:

- Encouraging sick students and staff to stay home and seek medical attention for severe illness.
- Facilitating hand hygiene by supplying soap, toilet paper and towels and teaching good hand hygiene practices.
- Being vigilant about cleaning and disinfecting classroom materials and surfaces.
- Providing messages in daily announcements about preventing infection diseases.
- Adopting healthy practices such as safe handling of food and use of standard precautions when handling body excretions and fluids.
- Encouraging students and staff to get annual influenza vaccinations or asking for clinic staff to visit schools and give them injection.
5.4.6 Shift from big classes to small and affordable ones

For the DoE to improve quality, its focus must be shifting from big overcrowded classrooms to smaller affordable ones. This can only be achieved if the pupil teacher ratio of 1:30 is strictly adhered to. In contrast to these findings are these of the class-size in Tennessee (Finn and Achilles, 1999). These researchers studied the effect small class size (15-17 students per classroom) had on primary grade achievement.

The Advocate for the city of New York investigated the effect overcrowding had on the school district organisation (December, 2000). He stated that in smaller classes’ students received more individual attention, asked more questions and participated more fully in discussions. Teachers report that they spend more time maintaining order and keeping the noise level down.

The author of the public Advocate report quoted from a US Department of Education press release (USDOE, September 2000) stated: "Evidence continues to accumulate that shows that reducing class size improves student achievement, reduces discipline problems and provides lasting benefit to both students and teachers” (PublicAdvocate,p.1)

5.5 Limitations regarding the study
In every study there are ups and downs; in the case of this study, the researcher encountered the problem of scheduled dates, to meet with the learners clashing with the writing of examinations and other school programmes. The appointment to meet with both the learners and teachers had to be rescheduled in order to give them time to prepare for the examination preparations and marking. The new arrangement pleased
both the researcher and all the participants. They had to sit for examinations and avail themselves after the examinations as study participants.

In the room where the participants took time to respond to questionnaires, the researcher read each statement to the learners slowly and paused for them to respond so that they could think carefully.

5.6 Recommendations for further studies
- Parental involvement to improve the relationship between learners and teachers.
- Strong need to shaft overcrowded environment to a less overcrowded and afforded environment so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The role of stakeholders in achieving success in education.

5.7 Conclusion
This chapter deals with the discussion of the findings that led to recommendations that the researcher made. A summary was done and the implications of the study were also discussed.
References


