

CHAPTER 2

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE OF RESILIENT SCHOOLING: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the proposed research was introduced and conceptualized. Literature indicates that the resilient schools all over the world have managed to maintain the learning culture despite exposure to adverse conditions contributing to a collapse of the learning culture. These include, among other factors, poor conditions and infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, unemployment, poverty, long distances to schools, lack of resources and facilities, absence of parents from home.

Literature indicates that many schools, particularly in the rural areas, have undergone similar experiences and yet they have managed to improve their learning culture despite exposure to rural hardships. It is against this background that this study aims at investigating school-based aspects related to the resilient schools and how they contribute towards the learning culture. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is on the aspects of school-based management and the South African resilient schooling from a managerial perspective.

The following aspects will be discussed:

- Theoretical framework for understanding the resilient schools
- Self-managing schools in South Africa from a resilient perspective
- Accountability
- Organisational aspects of resilient schools
- Management aspects supporting the learning culture
- Governance factors
- Characteristics of the resilient schooling
- Characteristics of a resilient learner

- The resiliency-building strategies
- Barriers to a learning culture in resilient schools

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING RESILIENT SCHOOLS

Traditionally, a dominant notion among people has been that stress and risk, poverty, chronic illness, abuse, loss and neglect or any other adverse life circumstances inevitably doom learners to develop negative behaviours which place them at risk of school failure and loss of hope for a quality adult life. Yet others are able to survive and thrive in the same circumstances. These children have resiliency (Forsythe & Licklider, in Cano, Wood & Simmons 1998:155). The foundation for the resiliency paradigm has been a dramatic new perspective on how children bounce back from stress, trauma and risk in their lives has emerged from the fields of psychiatry, psychology and sociology (Henderson & Milstein 1996:2). Recent studies in these fields have challenged this notion. As a result, the idea of resiliency, that people can bounce back from negative life experiences and often become even stronger in the process of overcoming them, has emerged from this research.

A call to action to focus on, understand, and enhance the development of resiliency has emerged not only from social scientists but also from teachers who have begun to understand the need for schools to be resiliency-fostering institutions for all who work and learn in them. A vital role of the school is to provide the social context for the development of resiliency in learners. Literature indicates that some schools perform this role better than others. When learners fail, schools fail. Schools, therefore, have the power to reverse this process and the power lies in providing the protective factors that promote resiliency (Forsythe & Licklider in Cano *et al.* 1998:155). Protective factors are the things which compensate for, shield, support, or strengthen a learner's response to single or multiple stresses.

In an effort to improve the education of learners in inner-city schools in the United States, Margaret Wang and colleagues developed a new term *resiliency* to address the educational problems. In the words of Vaillant (in Gultig, Ndhlovu & Bertram, 1999:94) *resiliency* conveys both the capacity to be bent without breaking and the capacity, once bent, to spring back. Schools, therefore, can provide the environment and conditions that foster resiliency in learners. Achieving the academic and life success for all learners, an enthusiastic, motivated, change-oriented staff involves increasing learners and staff resiliency.

2.3 SELF-MANAGING SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA FROM A RESILIENT PERSPECTIVE

The term ‘self-managing school’ was coined by Caldwell and Spinks (1988) (in Lumby *et al.*(2003:8), who defined such a school as:

One for which there has been significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority related to the allocation of resources. This decentralisation is administrative rather than political, with decisions being made within a framework of local, state or national policies or guidelines. The school remains accountable to a central authority for the manner in which resources are allocated.

The notion of self-managing schools has been established in countries such as England and Wales, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States and is being advocated in South Africa (Lumby *et al.*2003:9). The trend is to move away from centralised bureaucratic control of education towards ‘self-managing schools’. This initiative assumes that it is better for school communities to take control over their own affairs. Nir (2003:50) states that school-based management is based on the assumption that decisions made closer to the clients are better decisions.

The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) requires the schools to manage themselves. This implies a profound change in the culture and practice of schools. The

extent to which schools are to make the necessary change depends largely on the nature and quality of their internal management (Department of Education 1996 a, p28). In this country 'self management' in schools is based on two sections of the SASSA:

Section 20, gives schools responsibility for their own governing body constitution, mission statement, codes of conduct, curriculum and many other important functions;

Section 21, gives schools extra functions to control their own finances and extra curriculum functions.

Although these powers have been allocated to schools, many schools are unable to translate these powers into practice because of financial and other resource constraints. As Lumby *et al.* (2003:9) state: provincial departments of education currently have a limited ability to provide more than a minimal level of financial and other resources and support. As a result, some schools are unable to enhance their culture of learning as expected. However, some few schools have assumed a degree of autonomy and responsibility for managing their affairs beyond that provided for in current legislation. Their resiliency enabled them to sustain the learning culture despite exposure to financial and other resource constraints.

Although schools share similar management challenges as a result of recent policy and legislation, these have affected them to different extents. Donahue (in Lumby *et al.*)(2003:6) describes these management challenges as follows:

In many schools teachers, principals, learners, parents and sometimes the community are blaming each other for the breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning. There is a mutual lack of respect in many schools. Principals may claim that learners are undisciplined and that teachers are failing to do their job. Teachers complain that the principal is both authoritarian, while learners accuse teachers of sexual abuse, harassment, corporal punishment and of being both unprepared and uncaring. Teachers

may feel unsupported and undervalued by learners, principals and parents. Learners' absenteeism is high, as are drug and alcohol abuse.

This description illustrates clearly how big the management challenges are in this country. Despite all odds, some schools are able to work under difficult circumstances to ensure that the culture of learning occurs.

2.4 LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Historically in South Africa, leadership has been extremely authoritarian. In reaction to this, a more facilitative style of leadership and management has emerged. Leadership and management are closely related terms. Leadership is the art of facilitating a school to do the right thing at the right time, while management is the discipline required to ensure that the school does things right, or functions well (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:32). Leadership and management do not relate only to those in positions of power such as principals or heads of departments but also to teachers and other roleplayers in the school to be creative and responsible leaders. As Holly and Southworth (in Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:32) point out: *Leadership is not necessarily the property of the privileged few; it is the right and responsibility of us all.*

This element involves particular aspects of leaderships: different styles of leadership, leadership functions, qualities of a leader as well as the development of leadership capacity. It also involves particular aspects of management: different approaches to management, management functions, management strategies and management training. Governance of a school is also a leadership and management function (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:33).

The ensuing section describes leadership and management styles commonly found in schools.

2.4.1 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT STYLES

In discussing the different types of leadership, it is important to point out that leadership varies from one institution to another and that no two leaders or principals lead their schools in the same way. This section covers five types of leadership: autocratic, democratic, eclectic, transactional and laissez faire. These concepts have relevance to leadership in general.

2.4.1.1 Autocratic leadership

This type of leadership is commonly called coercive leadership or dictatorship because it is a leadership imposed on the organisation. In this type of leadership the leader alone determines policy and assigns tasks to members without consulting with them. The members of the organisation are expected to carry out the leader's directives without question. Musaazi (1982:63) state that any grumbling about the leader's actions or orders are met with force. The leader decrees what shall be done, and those being led have no choice but to accept it. The leader is always aloof from the group.

There are some principals who prefer to dictate to teachers. They strive for power and toughness in dealing with teachers. Likewise there are some class teachers who still prefer to dictate to learners instead of allowing them room for discussion and personal expression. In such schools the learners or teachers have very little or no say at all in anything relating to their school life. Such leadership inhibits initiative among the learners and teachers and very often leads to the collapse of the culture of teaching and learning. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:170) state that many South African schools are familiar with this type of leadership.

2.4.1.2 Democratic leadership

Democratic leadership entails the involvement, consultation and participation of stakeholders in matters affecting their activities. This type of leadership emphasises group and leader participation in the formulation of the school policies that serve as guidelines for school operations. This style requires a principal or a member of the school management team not to take unilateral decisions. Musaazi (1982:64) states that decisions about school matters are arrived at after consultation and communication with various people in the school.

This style of leadership leads to style flexibility. Christie and Potterton (in Gultig *et al.* 1999:95) identify a number of features of democratic leadership:

- *adaptability*- a willingness on the part of the principal to change if something appears not to be working.
- *flexibility of approach*- a willingness to try different things;
- *preparedness to consult with staff* – at least to some degree;
- *commitment*- to staff, learners, teaching and learning, and the school as a community;
- *concern for the wellbeing of the school* – rather than a commitment and concern for their own careers;
- *courage*- a willingness to take risks, including the risk of being unpopular with staff or learners on matters of principle or strong belief.

Heron (1992) (in Davidoff & Lazarus 2002:171) challenged this way of viewing of leadership. What he pointed out was that if we polarise *autocratic* and *democratic* leadership, we run the risk of labelling any form of directiveness as being autocratic and authoritarian. Heron maintains that in an effectively and democratically run school, directiveness is an essential aspect. He describes three main styles of leadership, all of which are important:

Directive: Leaders need to be directive at appropriate times and in appropriate ways. Consultation and negotiation is neither always necessary nor advisable, and leaders need

to be given the trust and the prerogative to make decisions and to steer the school on a particular course with clarity when necessary. Directive leadership is often important in the initiation of development processes at schools.

Consultative: There are times when it is absolutely necessary for leaders to consult and negotiate. Without consultation and negotiation, there is unlikely to be shared ownership of any change process and implementation of ideas is likely to be constrained by lack of commitment. Consultative leadership and management is particularly important when development processes are in place: it is at this point that it is important to consult with people about specific decisions and choices relating to the ongoing development of the school.

Autonomous: leaders need to know when to delegate authority so that they do not hold the entire reigns of power unilaterally or in unchecked fashion. Delegation of responsibilities provides an opportunity for other members of the school community to take responsibility for and to participate in the life of the school in a more meaningful way. Delegation of tasks allows for the sharing of control and responsibility – an important aspect of democracy.

Heron claims that all three of these leadership and management styles need to be operating where a school is trying to build a democratic ethos. They are interrelated; any one in operation without the others will result in an imbalanced situation.

This style requires the teachers, learners and principals to participate in the determination of the school rules and regulations. The disadvantage of this style is that it is time-consuming and depends upon majority opinion. The advantage is that all teachers and learners participate in the decision-making and promoting their morale. Wong (2003:245) states that everyone in the school can contribute to the development of vision. This style also helps to tap teachers with creative talents. It promotes greater group productivity, et cetera.

Ubben and Hughes (1992:6) describe three types of leadership:

Supportive leadership is leadership that includes giving consideration to the needs of subordinates, displaying concern for their welfare, and creating a friendly climate in the work unit.

Participative leadership is consultative and takes subordinates opinions and suggestions into account when making decisions.

Achievement-oriented leadership sets challenging goals, seeks performance improvements, emphasises excellence in performance, and shows confidence that subordinates can attain high standards.

2.4.1.3 Eclectic leadership

This style requires the principal to be flexible. It is unrealistic to expect the principal to have a single type of management style. His or her behaviour may at times be democratic, at other times, autocratic, while there may be occasions when he or she may withdraw and leave it to his or her staff to grapple with the problems and reach solutions for themselves. This is called eclectic style.

2.4.1.4 Transactional leadership

This style represents a compromise between the nomothetic which stresses organisational demands and the idiographic which stresses individual needs. In this case the leader appreciates the need to achieve organisational goals but at the same time makes sure that individuals members' needs are not ignored as they strive towards the institutional goals (Musaazi 1982:66). This style is characterised by the fact that the principal recognises the importance of institutional roles and expectations and he or she knows that pursuing those goals can result in the fulfillment of individual members' ambitions. This style requires the principal to vary his or her approach, for example, at times to stress the

nomothetic dimension and at other time times, the idiographic. Musaazi (1982:66) maintains that effective leadership compromises some measures of the two dimensions.

The leader who balances people and productivity is called a transactional leader. The disadvantage of this style is that it calls for the harnessing of individual motivation and group power to the performance of a common task. The advantage is that it sticks to rules and procedures and aims at producing as much as possible without upsetting people in terms of their group and individual needs.

2.4.1.5 Laissez faire

Laissez faire is a French expression which literally means 'let people do what they wish'. Laissez faire leadership therefore is the kind of leadership where there are practically no rules in the organisation. The leadership grants complete freedom to group or individual decision without the leader's participation or direction. This means that subordinates are free to do what they want. The principal just watches what is going on in the school. He or she has no authority. The result is often chaos. The primary role of the leader is merely to supply materials needed by the group he or she is supposedly leading. He remains apart from the group and participates only when the group has asked him or her to do so. Laissez faire is therefore leadership without a specific leader. Each individual among the followers can volunteer to do something for the organisation whenever he or she feels inspired to do so (Musaazi 1982:63; Davidoff & Lazarus 2002:170-171).

2.4.2 THE QUALITIES OF GOOD LEADERS

During the past few decades the assumption among people has been that good leadership and management is the acquisition of certain skills and understanding. Recent studies have shown that good leadership and management goes beyond the acquisition of skills. Good leadership and management inspires and touches, holds and cherishes, is humble and certain, pushes and directs, waits and listens. Good leaders have vision, imagination, passion about their calling, enthusiasm and commitment. They are perceptive and know

when to push and when to hold back; when to direct and when to let go; when to confront and when to leave the situation unchallenged. Being perceptive means being sensitive to the moods of others and to their needs and organisational priorities.

Good leadership and management requires the leaders to develop the ability to differentiate – that is, to make informed judgements about how to deal with particular situations. Good leadership and management is about having a repertoire of responses. Each moment is unique. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:167) state: what worked yesterday might be completely inappropriate today. This implies that being a good leader means having the flexibility to recognise the differences and respond appropriately and not bound by rules but guided rather by wisdom and intuition (Davidoff & Lazarus 2002:167).

Another aspect of good leadership is authenticity. Good leaders relate to people and others. A good leader is trustworthy and what he or she says is what he or she means. What he or she does is what he or she truly believes in. In this process of transformation in South Africa in particular, it is possible for anyone to develop the capacity to become a true leader. It requires commitment to the process of inner transformation.

2.5 ACCOUNTABILITY

The restructuring of school systems in recent years provides the context for tighter accountability of schools to their systems. Emphasis placed on decentralisation, devolution and school-based management have necessarily been counterbalanced by demands on more autonomous schools to render accounts for their performance to their central administrative offices (Dimmock & Donoghue 1997:149).

Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:95) state that the demands of both democracy and efficiency require some form of accountability in the school. All roleplayers have to be held accountable in terms of the particular responsibilities they hold in the overall school system. The school has to find a system of accountability that facilitates the fulfilment of

its aims. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:95) maintain that accountability need not to be practised as a policing system rather be used to establish an ethos in the school where mutual accountabilities are fulfilled through a deep sense of commitment to the realisation of a shared vision.

In a democratic school, accountability entails that teachers, learners and parents are important participants in the school development process, therefore, they are to account for their involvement in any process such as in decision-making structures et cetera. The advantage of a system of accountability is that when people feel they are genuinely part of a real process and participating meaningfully in the shaping of the school life, decisions that are made are far more likely to be followed through and people feel valued (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:95).

2.6 ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS OF RESILIENT SCHOOLS

2.6.1 Governance

The shifts in the policies relating to school governance clearly illustrate the movement by the state away from a minimalist position that emphasise partnership between school communities and provincial authorities to a position that places governing bodies under the jurisdiction of the provincial Member of the Executive Council (Gilmour 2001:11).

Governance is therefore concerned with relationships between people: individuals, interest groups, direct stakeholders, and institutions and structures in the education system. The assumption about governance is that it is seen as cooperation and partnership and management. Therefore, stakeholder relationships are very important to the task of leading and managing the schools. The issue of governance is the responsibility of the school governing body (2.3).

2.6.1.1 School governing body

The governing body of the school is the legal body responsible for the development of overall school policy including language policy and a code of conduct for learners, the vision and mission of the school, financial management and fundraising, as well as making recommendations about appointments at the school (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:165) (2.3).

The governing body comprises the principal, democratically elected educators, parents, community representatives and democratically elected learners in the case of secondary schools. Learners in effective schools are fully involved in the life of the school. Achievement, for example, is higher where learners take responsibility for their own learning (Harber & Trafford 1999:45).

Tikly (1997:179) states that parents should have a majority representation on governing bodies. They are responsible for school governance while the principal together with his or her deputy principal, heads of department and senior staff, are responsible for day-to-day management of the school.

The advantage of having effective governing body is that it ensures that the school is fulfilling its particular purpose, and provides an important mechanism for accountability and transparency. It provides a link between the school and its community and ensures that all roleplayers are represented. The functions of school governing bodies are fully discussed on chapter 3 (3.3). Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:165) maintain that this is another way of ensuring meaningful participation of all the roleplayers in the school.

2.6.1.2 School policies

The people that are managed vary between schools and as individuals and groups, within schools. They have different expectations and needs. Similarly, different principals hold different beliefs about managing teachers. Policies represent both formal and informal

agreements about how things are done in the school (Fidler, Russel & Simkins (1997:143). Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:38) state that a school's policy reflects the identity of a school. It encapsulates particular principles that act as guidelines for practice. In order for schools to be effective, it needs to develop its policy that reflects the education system and school's values. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:38) state that this is a central role of the school governing body.

2.6.1.3 Communication within the school

The particular way in which the subsystems of the school communicate and link with one another reflects the ethos and the specific management approach of the school. For example, in a democratically managed school, lines of communication between the different systems would be as open as possible, to facilitate maximum participation in the life of the school (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:96). The resilient schools employ a two-way communication approach.

The resilient schools ensure that access to appropriate information is facilitated. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:97) discuss a number of forms of communication that are common to resilient schools. These include:

- Meetings with one, some, or all concerned
- Internal communication
- Circular letter
- Circulation of relevant documents, for example minutes of meetings and reports
- Notice boards et cetera.

The advantage of a transparent communication is that it helps to establish transparency in the school. It also helps to bring about a sense of shared ownership and encourages commitment to seeing decisions through because people have been empowered by their knowledge of the situation and participation in the decision-making process. This, in turn, is likely to result in a higher level of staff morale, and reduction in suspicion and uncertainty (Davidoff & Lazarus 2002:28).

2.6.1.4 Governance and community relationships

Governance and community relationships have been a key concern of education policy in South Africa. The shift to self-governance for schools in South Africa depends largely on the ability of individual school governing body to fulfil its role successfully. Literature indicates that governance issues in resilient schools are straightforward. Parents and learners are involved in decision-making. Meetings are properly minuted and decisions recorded. The resilient schools have sound systems in place for monitoring and evaluating how well the school is doing. Parents are invited to school to observe some of the school activities (Mpumalanga Education Department 2000:18).

2.6.1.5 Resilient principals promote parental involvement

Improving parent involvement, particularly among at-risk populations, is one of the most challenging tasks facing teachers today. For many parents, school brings back memories of their own failure (Vandergrift & Greene 1992:57). McEwan (2003:66) concurs: their own personal schooling experiences or previous encounter with less effective schools or principals may have left them feeling prickly and defensive. Highly effective principals are able to help parents like these realise how important they are to the life of the school and to defuse their anger and frustration. Some feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, even guilty when they walk into a school. Others do not feel valued by the schools (Vandegrift & Greene 1992:57). Mathonsi (2004:20) states that factors such as transport and work commitment militate against parental involvement.

Teachers in the past held assumptions that worked against promoting the sort of parent involvement that might help children's academic achievement (Goldenberg 2004:33). When teachers contacted parents, it was purely for discipline problems. They felt that parents needed a great deal of training to help their children with school work, that parents were largely illiterate and that families were under economic stress and that they could not be expected to play a meaningful role in their children's academic development.

Recent studies in the school and community showed that these assumptions are unfounded. McEwan (2003:66) describes many strategies that can be employed to increase parental involvement. In order for parents to feel valued by the school, McEwan (2003:66) indicates that parents need to be understood and appreciated before they become part of the school community. Effective principals use various strategies to help parents take the first step towards involvement and eventual commitment to the mission of the school. Many parents need love and empathy before they feel safe and welcome at school. Effective principals recruit, enlist, cajole, motivate and when all else fails, offer incentives and rewards to parents to move towards the mission of the school (McEwan 2003:66).

Parental involvement does not only mean to help children with homework. Defining what is meant by parental involvement is problematic (Jowett & Baginsky 1991:199). They need to be supportive and active in the education of their children. This combination of level of commitment and active participation is what constitutes parental involvement (Vandergrift & Greene 1992:57).

2.6.2 Management

Management is about making sure that the school, as a whole, is functioning effectively and achieving its vision. It entails that things are operating smoothly, that structures are in place to support forward movement, that processes are contained and that the school is operating efficiently. Management is also about looking after the people in the school. Thus relevant management issues would be systems management ensuring the relevant structures and procedures are in place and are functioning effectively; time management such as prioritising tasks setting time-frames and keeping to them, using time productively, for example, when to have meetings and when to send memos out, stress management such as producing a working environment which does not cause unnecessary stress, and conflict management such as developing mechanisms for dealing with conflict openly and productively (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:157).

2.6.2.1 Managing discipline

Literature indicates that managing discipline in the resilient schools is linked to the educational vision of the schools. Discipline is anchored in educational needs. For example, disciplinary actions against late-coming, absenteeism, substance abuse are linked to educational purpose (Gultig, Ndhlovu & Bertram 1999:97). Rules and regulations are accessible to all learners, educators and parents. Learners are aware of disciplinary actions to be instituted should they transgress the school rules and regulations.

The resilient schools have consistent disciplinary practices unique to themselves. For example, cleaning of classrooms, toilets and picking up papers in school premises. Resilient teachers are aware that corporal punishment is now against the law and that is why they have alternatives to it. Literature also indicates that personal interaction plays a significant role in managing discipline (Gultig *et al.* 1999:97). This means that if there are problems with individual learner somebody might notice him or her and takes action. Managing discipline is therefore the responsibility of all teachers.

2.6.1.2 Managing facilities and resources

Access to and control of resources are of central concern to any organisation (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:28). In the school context, the resource management includes finances, administrative equipment and materials, teaching equipment and facilities. The school governing body and the principal together with school management team is expected to ensure the availability and fairly distribution of these resources. They are also expected to ensure that the resources are safely and well kept.

2.6.1.3 Managing school finances

Historically, principals and teachers have had little experience in managing school finance. It is particularly important at this point in the history of South Africa when schools are being given more financial autonomy, to build the capacity of the school to manage its own resources (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:120). In terms of the South African School Act (1996), schools are to manage their finances. This Act regards the school governing body as the overall financial management body of the school (2.3)

Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:118) state that the first step in managing money that has been allocated to the school by the Department of Education is the development of school budgets. These budgets would include items such as:

- capital expenditure
- operating or running costs.

All stakeholders in the school draw these budgets (Davidoff & Lazarus 1997:119). Once the budget has been completed and approved in the parents meeting, an accounting system is set up. At the end of particular periods: every quarter, semester, semester and or year, the school community should be presented with a financial statement.

2.6.1.4 The school management team

The South African Schools Act (1996) requires a system of democracy in managing the school. In terms of the new definition of leadership and management, the principal is no longer allowed to run the school alone. He or she is expected to form a school management team (SMT) made up of senior level staff. The SMT is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school and for putting the school's policies into practice.

2.7 THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE OF RESILIENT SCHOOLING

2.7.1 INTRODUCTION

The resilient schools possess typical characteristics which distinguish them from non-resilient schools. The ensuing section describes it in detail.

2.7.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESILIENT SCHOOLING

2.7.2.1 A sense of responsibility

The findings of the study by Christie and Potterton (in Gultig *et al.* 1999:94) indicate that the key feature of the resilient school is a sense of responsibility. The most significant manifestation of this is a willingness and the ability to take initiatives and recognise things they are able to do for themselves such as mustering the necessary resources and to act.

The key here is a preparedness to act, that is, to move away from passivity and victimhood to active agency. This means that a resilient school does not wait for the Department of Education to do things for it. A means within the school is sought to address the problem.

2.7.2.2 Good leadership and governance

The following features of leadership are present in the leadership style of a resilient principal.

- Adaptability. This behaviour is exemplified in a willingness on the part of the principal to change if something appears not to be working;
- Flexibility of approach. This implies a willingness to try different approaches;
- Preparedness to consult with staff- at least to some degree;
- Commitment to staff, learners, teaching and learning, and the school as a community;

- Concern for the wellbeing of the school- rather than a commitment and concern for his or her own career;
- A sense of purpose most often stemming from a religious or social commitment, as well as an educational purpose;
- Courage- a willingness to take risks, including the risk of being unpopular with staff or students on matters of principle or strong belief (2.4.1.2).

In short, resilient principals seem to exhibit a gift for educational leadership and organisation.

2.7.2.3 A clear focus on teaching and learning

It is widely accepted that resilient schooling has well-organized programmes of teaching and learning. Timetables are in evidence; teachers and learners are working inside classrooms and movement between classes is purposeful. Teachers use all available time during school hours and sometimes schedule study time after hours for teaching and learning. Lateness and absenteeism on the part of both staff and learners are not condoned and are always kept at a minimum.

2.7.2.4 A safe and decent environment

The resilient school distinguishes itself from a non-resilient school because it often tries its utmost to provide a demarcated safe and orderly space for both teachers and learners. There are clear boundaries in place and problems such as criminality and substance abuse are dealt with accordingly and firmly. The school is fenced. It demonstrates the regular routines of a functioning social institution. It works along regular routines; social relations of authority, accountability and respect are in place; boundaries of time and space are maintained; and rituals such as assemblies and uniforms are evident.

2.7.2.5 Clear lines of authority and discipline

The key feature of discipline in the resilient school is its link to the educational vision of the school. Discipline is anchored in educational needs. Thus, disciplinary actions against late-coming, absenteeism and substance abuse are linked to educational purpose, rather than seen as ends in themselves.

The resilient school has consistent disciplinary practices. It uses the cleaning of classrooms, toilets and grounds as a disciplinary measure. The principal and teachers do not use corporal punishment because they are keenly aware that this is illegal. They explore alternatives to corporal punishment and reserve it for serious offences.

Another notable feature of maintaining discipline is personal interaction. This is evident in the way all learners are personally known to at least some members of staff, even if not to all. This means that if there are problems with individual learners, somebody is able to notice them and take action instantly. This stands in contrast to a non-resilient school where registers are not kept regularly and teachers do not know whether students are present or absent.

2.8 CHARACTERISTICS OF A RESILIENT LEARNER

Benard (in Henderson & Milstein 1996:8) characterises the resilient child as socially competent, with life skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and the ability to take initiative. In addition, the resilient child has a sense of purpose and foresees a positive future for himself or herself. This indicates that such a child possesses typical characteristics that distinguish him or her from non-resilient children. These characteristics will be discussed in the ensuing section.

2.8.1 Social competence

Competence means the ability to do something well (Donald *et al.* 1997: 83). On the other hand, the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (1989: 235) defines competence as being competent in doing something or the ability to do something. There is a general consensus among writers that the resilient learner exhibits social competence (Joseph, 1994: 28; Cano *et al.* 1998: 156; Krovetz, 1999: 7). Social competence means the ability to elicit positive relationships from both adults and peers (Krovetz, 1999: 7). In order to explain social competence as it is used in this section, I shall define social competence as follows: the ability to accomplish something successfully or to establish positive relationships with others despite environmental, economical, social and educational adversities.

According to Cano *et al.* (1998: 156), the resilient learner exhibits social competence through prosocial behaviors such as flexibility, communicability and humour and is also appreciative, gentle, nurturant, sensitive and socially perceptive. He or she tends to develop more positive relationships with others in his or her environment and is able to find supportive persons even in extremely negative situations.

2.8.2 Problem-solving skills

Problem solving skills means adopting a planning strategy that facilitates seeing one in control and applying resourcefulness in seeking help from others (Krovetz, 1999: 7). What is evident is that problem-solving skills begin to occur when a learner starts to think abstractly, reflectively and flexibly. It also occurs when a learner explores alternative solutions for cognitive and social problems (Bernard in Cano *et al.* 1998: 156). The learner is likely to have experience in solving social problems. Parents and teachers are the role models for this learner. Papalia and Wendkos Olds (1988: 333) maintain that a child observes positive models – parents, older sibling or others – dealing with frustration and making the best of a bad situation. Papalia and Wendkos Olds (1988:333) state further that parents and teachers have also faced challenges and have worked out

solutions. Therefore learners should learn that they can also work out solutions to their problems. Thus, learners are encouraged to solve problems which confront them as well.

2.8.3 A sense of autonomy

Benard, (in Cano *et al.* 1998: 156) and Krovetz, (1999:7) have defined the concept of 'autonomy' as "a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently while exerting some control over one's environment". Critical analysis of this definition has revealed three attributes of resilient learners: self – identity, independence and a sense of control. Self – identity means a concept of self, meaning that a person perceives himself in accordance with others and acts accordingly (Murphy in Vrey 1979:45). Independence in this context means doing something voluntarily. A sense of control means an individual can control himself and accepts responsibility for any decision made and its consequences (Joseph, 1994: 31).

2.8.4 A sense of purpose and future

The resilient learner has a positive image of his self-worth. Self-image or self-concept is the belief held by people about themselves. Something happens to the self – concept of the learner who has a sense of purpose. He or she becomes actively and positively engaged with teachers, peers and parents and feels empowered in his or her own right (Donald *et al.* 1997: 148). He or she attaches meaning and value to what he or she is doing whether it is good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Through feeling good about himself or herself, he or she is able to identify goals to be achieved and stay focused on those attainable goals. In times of adversity or task difficulty, a goal – oriented perspective motivates him or her to persevere. According to Joseph (1994: 32), a child who is able to see a meaning behind suffering is a child with a sense of commitment and compassion. He or she becomes helpful to his or her peers and encourages them to be hopeful about their future.

2.9 THE RESILIENCY-BUILDING STRATEGIES

Henderson and Milstein (1996: 40) have discussed six resiliency – building strategies. These strategies will be discussed in turn because in each strategy the teacher exhibits certain characteristics of resiliency

Schools as well as families and communities can develop resiliency in learners by applying a six-step strategy for resiliency building. These include: Providing a caring and supportive environment, setting and communicating high and clear expectations, providing opportunities for meaningful participation, increasing bonding, teaching life skills and setting clear and consistent boundaries. These strategies are discussed in turn below.

2.9.1 Providing a caring and supportive environment

Caring and support are cited as the most crucial element of resiliency building (Henderson & Milstein, 1996: 28; Fraser, 1997: 25; Cano *et al*, 1998: 160). Vrey (1979: 95) maintains that care is much more than the provision of food and clothing. Care is about being concerned about one's well being, health, joys and sorrows. Henderson and Milstein (1996: 13) state that caring and support is about providing unconditional positive regard and encouragement to all learners because it is difficult to successfully overcome adversity without the presence of caring and support. This caring does not necessarily have to come from a learner's biological family. Werner and Smith (in Henderson & Milstein, 1996: 13) state that, teachers, neighbors and youth workers may also provide caring and support.

Caring and support is also fostered through the use of incentive programmes. These programmes aim at offering every learner a chance to succeed in whatever initiative he or she undertakes. For example, if the child is caught for 'random acts of kindness' or found to be improving in academic work, behavior or attendance, his or her improvement is recognized at an all – school assembly with his or her parents in attendance

(Henderson & Milstein, 1996: 96). Incentives accentuate the positive outcomes. Fraser (1997: 25) states that intervention programmes offering supporting services to high-risk children have produced positive outcomes. This strongly suggests that social support provides a protective function.

The educator functions as a major facilitator of a learner's personal resiliency. The teacher listens for resiliencies when the child is explaining his or her problematic experiences. Henderson and Milstein (1996:28) say that the teacher is expected to encourage the learner by saying things like "Your understanding of what is going on at home is a real strength" or "Your ability to find laughter in your situation is an incredibly positive way of coping with what's going on".

2.9.2 Setting and communicating high and clear expectations

It is important that expectations be both high and realistic in order to be effective motivators. In reality, however, many children in schools, especially those stuck with one or more of the myriad of labels used in schools, experience unrealistically low expectations and adopt low expectations for themselves (Henderson & Milstein, 1996:13)

It is maintained that children who develop high expectations for themselves are likely to develop the characteristics of resiliency, such as social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and of a future. Because children are believed to have potential to develop high expectations for themselves, therefore the school must not disappoint their expectations; instead it must set high expectations for them. Henderson and Milstein (1996:56) argue that the school should refrain from promoting minimal compliance but instead messages from teachers to learners must reflect high expectations.

2.9.3 Providing opportunities for meaningful participation

Meaningful participation means contribution (Hawkins & Catalano in Cano *et al.* 1998: 158). Meaningful contribution occurs when the child develops a sense of personal worth

and the ability to contribute meaningfully. Participation is meaningful when it makes learners see the need and value for doing something. That is why Henderson and Milstein (1996:57) state that for meaningful participation to occur, learners need to believe that they are doing things that matter. They should be challenged to contribute to their fullest capacity, to recognise the value of participating and co-operating; to have a sense of their own impact on overall organisational dynamics, to be in control of their own futures, to take risks and to treat each other with respect. The foregoing approach would make learners feel that the educators actively engage them or challenge them to use their minds well.

2.9.4 Increasing bonding to enhance ownership

This involves increasing the connections between individuals and any pro-social person or activity and is based on the evidence that the child with strong positive bonds is far less involved in risk behaviors than the child without these bonds. Similarly, school change literature also focuses on bonding learners to school and academic accomplishment through connecting to each student's preferred learning style (Henderson & Milstein, 1996:11-12).

2.9.5 Teaching life skills

According to Henderson and Milstein (1996:13), these include co-operation, healthy conflict resolution, resistance and assertiveness skills, communication skills, problem-solving, decision-making skills and healthy stress management. When these skills are adequately taught and reinforced, they will help students successfully navigate the perils of adolescence, especially the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. These skills are also important in creating an environment that is conducive to learning and in assisting adults in being able to engage in effective interactions within the school.

2.9.6 Setting clear and consistent boundaries

This involves the development and consistent implementation of school policies and procedures and the importance of clarifying expectations of behavior. These expectations should include addressing risk behaviors for learners and should be clearly written, clearly communicated and coupled with appropriate consequences that are consistently enforced (Henderson & Milstein, 1996:12).

2.10 BARRIERS TO A LEARNING CULTURE IN RESILIENT SCHOOLS

2.10.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

2.10.1.1 Social problems

Levett (in Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana 1997:206) point out that child abuse is a disturbing common and serious social problem in South Africa. Child abuse may take three different forms: sexual, physical and emotional abuse. The following forms are cited in the literature.

2.10.1.2 Sexual abuse

Donald *et al.* (1997:206) state that this kind of abuse involves any sexual activity, from sexual touching to full intercourse, by an adult or adolescent on a child who developmentally is not able to understand fully or give consent to the activity. Most commonly, sexual abuse occurs within the family parent(s), step-parents or temporary partners, grandparents, older siblings, uncles or aunts. Literature indicates that sexual abuse may occur within the school through the way educators may sexually exploit learners. These experiences are common in both rural and urban areas.

2.10.1.3 Physical abuse

Donald *et al.* (1997:206) state that physical abuse is probably more common, and may be just as serious in its consequences for a learner's development. It involves intentional acts on the part of parent(s), their partners, or caregivers (including teachers) to physically hurt a child. Most commonly this means beatings or corporal punishment. The Department of Education does not tolerate corporal punishment; it is illegal. The approach of the Department of Education is fostering good behaviour rather than punishing bad behaviour. The Department has produced some useful materials on alternatives to corporal punishment in order not to allow anyone to abuse learners physically.

2.10.1.4 Emotional abuse

Literature shows that emotional abuse may involve parent(s) or caregivers (including teachers) engaging in patterns of behaviour which are consistently destructive of a child's emotional and psychological well-being. The more common ones include emotionally neglecting, negating, rejecting, isolating, terrorising or corrupting a child. Most children experience some of these things at one time or another (Donald *et al.* 1997:206). Literature indicates that emotional abuse may happen through the way educators may victimise, negate and reject learners.

2.10.1.5 Lack of transport for learners

Although literature shows that the provision of transport for learners has benefits for learners, parents and schools in the rural areas, the literature also points out that a substantial number of children in the rural areas are currently without a mode of transportation. As a result they have to walk long distances to schools daily. The distance

factor is, therefore, counter-productive because by the time children reach the school, they are already tired and are unable to concentrate in their lesson (Duma 1995:90).

The schools in rural communities are sparsely distributed. The lack of a school transport system in rural communities has been one of the factors that have contributed significantly to a high failure rate. The Department of Education is therefore expected to provide adequate mode of transportation or else build more schools within a walking distance to schools to ensure that learners do not attend a school at an unreasonable distance. The provision of adequate mode of transportation will make it difficult for those who sexually abuse female learners capitalising on long distances these learners walk to schools (Mpumalanga Education News 2001:7).

2.10.1.6 Low economic status of household

In accordance with Seetharama and Ushadevi (1985:35), the economic status of a family has impact on schooling of children. They indicate that if the economic status of a family is high, children are encouraged to remain in school until achieve high qualifications, which will make them marketable in the labour force. However, low earners are inclined to withdraw their children and encourage them to look for employment in the labour market to supplement their economic status. This is also a common experience in rural communities of Mpumalanga because the majority of parents in the rural areas are unemployed and those few who are employed are earning a salary below the subsistence level.

Moreover, the majority of children in primary schools is without parents and is mostly supported by grandparents. As a result, children are kept at home to do domestic work, thus bringing an extra income into the household (Duma, 1995:92).

These problems are not confined to South Africa and rural communities in particular. In Britain poverty continues to exist. Many parents and children live in hardship and, in addition, many have the extra difficulty of living in areas of social deprivation. Teachers and schools can play an important role in improving the life chances of children (Doyle & Well 1997:147).

2.10.1.7 Teenage pregnancy

The rate of teenage pregnancy is exceedingly high due to the socio-economic status of parents. Teenage pregnancy implies both short-term or long-term schooling or learning disruption (Mokgalabone,1999:55). Girls aged 13 to 16 years old are having children and studies indicate that females aged 13 and 16 are more emotionally involved in sexual matters (Mokgalabone,1999:57). Nationally 16.4% of learners who have had sex have either been pregnant or made someone pregnant. The prevalence of having made someone pregnant or been pregnant, among learners aged 13 years or under (38.0%) who have had sex was significantly higher than for learners of all older ages who have had sex. The provincial prevalence for learners who have had sex reporting having made someone pregnant or having been pregnant was highest in Mpumalanga (21.5%) (Department of Health 2002:54). This suggests that teenage pregnancy is still a problem.

2.11 CONCLUSION

The focus of this chapter was on the aspects of school-based management and the South African perspective of resilient schooling and how it features in the new education dispensation in South Africa. School-based management is an attempt to decentralise and debureaucratise school control. Proponents argue that the problems with today's schools are caused by the highly centralised controls to which the school has been subjected. More attention in this chapter was therefore given to leadership because schools in South Africa are in the process of transforming its leadership. As for management, the school culture and practice have to change. Under school-based management the school is the

primary unit of educational decision-making. Principals and teachers make decisions concerning expenditure and curricular activities with the participation of parents, learners and members of community. Prasch (1990:24) states that teachers must have access to relevant information if they are to participate intelligently in decision-making. The principal must play an aggressive role in disseminating the information. Teaching and learning are the key business of resilient schools. Prasch (1990:25) states that time for teachers to teach must be protected.

It was evident from the literature that the key features of the learning culture of resilient schooling depend on the type of internal management. These include a democratic leadership, good governance and management and educational resiliency in the sense that schools have the power to build academic and personal resiliency in learners despite exposure to all forms of adversities. The research findings also show that even if barriers to resiliency may exist, individual teachers in individual classrooms can still create havens of resiliency building – environments that are also strongly associated with academic success. To do these things, however, teachers themselves must be resilient. If we are to promote and ensure high quality learning, the management of schools in rural communities has to build on its expertise and develop effective strategies for the future (Smith 1995:225). Chapter three will focus on the contextual realities of schooling in Mpumalanga.