

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to explore the learning culture of resilient schools in the rural communities of Mpumalanga. Theories and findings from previous studies on the culture of learning of resilient schools are integrated with the key themes that emerged from the qualitative study based on the main findings of this study. In this regard, democratic leadership, accountability, community relationship, teachers' efforts in promoting the learning culture, commitment to teaching and learning, involvement of parents and learners in school governance, effective management of facilities and resources, safety of learners and teachers, consistent disciplinary measures and a sense of responsibility were identified as factors that influence the culture of learning of resilient schools (2.1). The data demonstrate that there is no distinctive aspect of the learning culture of resilient schools because all aspects are interrelated and interdependent. This study discovered that the most effective aspect, which benefits the culture of learning in resilient schools, was the involvement of all stakeholders.

This chapter therefore presents summaries of chapters, findings from the literature as well as findings from the empirical study and conclusions. Furthermore, a synthesis of the main findings and recommendations on how to inspire and motivate school communities to continuously strive towards becoming more resilient and centres of learning are also provided in this chapter. The recommendations for further study are provided. The limitations of this study are also discussed.

6.2 SUMMARIES OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1

This chapter concentrated on an overview of the research. The awareness of the problem, statement of the problem, aims of the investigation, research design and methods of the study, demarcation of the study, definition of concepts, research programme and limitation of the study were discussed.

Chapter 2

This chapter dealt with the aspects of school-based management and the South African perspective of resilient schooling to understand how they have influenced the learning culture of resilient school. This chapter focussed on the theoretical framework for understanding resilient schools, self-managing schools in South Africa from a resilient perspective, leadership, management and governance, leadership and management styles, the qualities of good leaders, accountability, organisational aspects of resilient schools, management aspects supporting the learning culture, characteristics of resilient schooling and a resilient learner, resiliency-building strategies and barriers to a learning culture in resilient schools.

Literature indicates that the resilient schools all over the world have managed to maintain the learning culture despite exposure to adverse condition. The fact that resilient schools are able to succeed and reinstate a healthy learning culture that contribute to a positive schooling experience is a clear indication that poor conditions are not necessarily barriers to learning. The latter notion can end the current breakdown of the learning culture in South African education, and specifically in rural communities of Mpumalanga.

Chapter 3

Many contextual factors have influenced the culture of teaching and learning in South Africa and specifically in Mpumalanga. This chapter therefore attempted to investigate the contextual realities of schooling that have influenced the culture of teaching and learning in the rural communities of Mpumalanga. It also dealt with the behaviour of youths and teachers in the schools. Research on schooling in rural areas of Mpumalanga has established the following:

- Facilities are frequently inadequate (3.5).
- The backlog in the provision of facilities is still prevalent (3.5).
- Classrooms are overcrowded (3.5)
- The learners' performance has remained fairly low (3.9.1).
- Parents' level of education needs improvement (3.11).
- The establishment of SGBs have contributed mildly to effective functioning of the schools (3.3)
- Barriers to the culture of teaching and learning need to be addressed (3.7)
- Teacher qualifications need improvement (3.10).
- Lack of discipline is still a problem (3.12).
- Assistance from the department seems minimal (3.13).

This chapter therefore provided background information on schooling realities in the rural communities of Mpumalanga and the challenge to restore the culture of learning in this province.

Chapter 4

The method used in this study was a qualitative exploration of the culture of teaching and learning in the rural communities of Mpumalanga. Qualitative methodology was chosen for its richness and context sensitivity (4.3.). Two schools were selected for in-depth investigation according to criteria of resiliency such as producing good matriculation

results despite the presence of adverse conditions. These schools were therefore selected for in-depth study according to purposeful sampling. That is where the richest source of information would be elicited. The data was collected by means of different methods such as observation and interviews (4.4.1; 4.3.3). The aim was to examine the tenets of resiliency in these schools which supported the learning culture.

Chapter 5

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the empirical investigation into the learning culture of resilient schools in the rural communities of Mpumalanga (5.6). The data has revealed that the resilient schools do have problems as well. The data has also revealed that the schools used for in-depth study had to overcome harsh conditions before developing resiliency and becoming healthy centres for learning and teaching. These include a lack of facilities and resources, management and governance factors and poor quality of teaching and learning. However, these problems are viewed as challenges to be overcome in order for learning and teaching to occur. Teachers and learners are committed to teaching and learning despite exposure to poor conditions and a lack of facilities.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

One of the critical challenges facing the South African government is to improve the learning culture in schools. Of course, this is not an easy task. There are many contributory factors for this state of affairs. Some people are resistant to changes while others are not even aware of changes taking place in the education system.

The literature indicates that since 1994, the education system in South Africa has introduced many reforms aimed at transforming education. In an effort to ensure that schools are transformed, the government has promulgated legislation that gives schools extra powers to control their own affairs. The trend is to move away from centralised bureaucratic control of education towards more self-managed schools (1.3). This provision

creates an environment in which governance and management are shared amongst all stakeholders within the school.

The implication of this provision for principals, teachers, parents, and learners is that their participation in the management and governance of schools can contribute to improving the learning culture. The focus of this research has been on those school-based aspects that have influence the learning culture of resilient schools. These include school policies and procedures for dealing with absences, lateness and truancy, leadership and management, governance as partnership with parents and learners, the quality of teaching and learning, learner achievement, safety within the school and a sense of responsibility and accountability. These aspects of school-based management are regarded as factors that enhance the learning culture.

As the aim of education is to improve the learning culture in schools, the department of education has therefore devolved powers to school level in order for schools to be democratically managed. The fact that schools in South Africa are required to be centres of learning through democratic governance has given impetus to this study. It became necessary to investigate the culture of learning of resilient schools in the rural communities of Mpumalanga and derive lessons from their management. I found that these schools were democratically managed.

The main research question has been answered. The question was why certain schools in rural Mpumalanga are functional while similar schools in the same rural community fail to do so. The schools are functional because they are democratically managed and the resilient nature makes them effective, despite all odds.

The international trends on school-based management have proved effective in the sense that the school atmosphere or ethos has improved with more communication, trust, responsibility, mutual respect, openness, equality, a greater sense of belonging and positive interaction. In the light of the international trends regarding school management

and governance, South African schools can learn the lessons of resilient schools and apply them in practice.

The data was qualitatively analysed and conclusions were drawn regarding the following aspects of management:

- (a) Governance as partnership
- (b) Democratisation and shared decision-making
- (c) Sense of belonging
- (d) Functions of role players
- (e) Commitment and accountability of stakeholders
- (f) Leadership style of principals

6.4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings that emerged from the literature and the empirical study. The data analysis is also discussed.

6.4.1 Summary of findings from literature

The findings from the literature on the school-based management aspects related to the culture of learning of resilient schools are as follows:

- The effectiveness of resilient school is determined to a very large extent by the quality of management within the school, and its preparedness to overcome harsh conditions in order for learning and teaching to occur (1.2).
- Resilient schooling has well-organised programmes of teaching and learning (3.8) Teaching and learning are the core business of the school. Thus, while school policies have emphasised democratic governance and adequate resourcing, these policies are linked to the educational vision of the school, implying that teaching and learning must remain the focal point.

- Building a sense of responsibility and accountability in the school are the main priority (2.5 & 2.7.2.1). The schools utilise whatever resources they have at their disposal to benefit teaching and learning.
- Teachers, learners and parents are the key role players in creating a learning culture in the resilient school (2.6.1.1).
- Safety and security are the major concern of the resilient school (2.7.2.4). The literature indicates that children do not learn in an unsafe environment therefore, the school needs to ensure the safety of learners in the school.
- Resilient schools have high expectations for both educators and learners (2.9.2). The resilient schools expect the best from educators and learners in terms of their performance. Their performance is monitored regularly by using monitoring tools.
- Resilient schools have structures in place, for example, the finance and sports committees to assist in the execution of certain activities (2.6.2.3).
- The resilient schools do not solely depend on the Department of Education for survival. They use their own limited resources effectively (1.3).

6.4.2 The important findings from the empirical study

This section discusses the findings that emerged from the observations and interviews with the key informants. The findings are as follows:

- There has been effective teaching in spite of the lack of facilities and resources (5.7.1.1). There are structures and systems in place that help these schools to use and maintain the limited resources and facilities effectively. The policies guiding these structures are transparent.

- Teachers and learners are committed to teaching and learning (5.6.1.1). Teaching and learning are the main focus of resilient schools. The school activities are anchored to a common vision. As a result, teachers have developed a sense of pride and ownership of the school.
- The schools are safe and decent for teaching and learning to occur (5.6.1.3). The fencing of the schools and constant monitoring for weapons and drug abuse are indications of commitment of resilient schools to safety and decent environment in order for teachers and learners to feel safe. Thus teaching and learning occur.
- Learners, teachers and parents have a sense of accountability (5.6.2.1). The demands of both democracy and efficiency require some form of accountability in the school. These stakeholders have been found accountable to one another for teaching and learning to occur.
- Setting high expectations encourages learners to be responsible for their studies (5.6.2.2). Literature states that these expectations should be realistic, clarified and implemented consistently. As can be seen in the two schools investigated, expectations were realistic and clearly communicated to all learners.
- School policies have contributed to effective management of discipline and learning culture (5.6.3.1). The schools have policies that enable it to run smoothly. Therefore, school policies are essential for effective learning to occur.
- The schools are democratically managed (5.6.4.1). The democratic management styles of the principals have contributed to effective functioning of the schools and enhanced the culture of learning. This is in line with the South African Schools Act of 1996.
- There has been sound relationship among educators and learners (5.6.3.2). In any social system, sound relationships among people contribute to the effectiveness of

that organisation. As can be seen in the schools investigated, their effectiveness has been attributed to sound relationships among stakeholders.

- Disciplinary structures are in place (5.6.4.2). The schools maintained discipline at all costs. Disciplinary structures such as disciplinary committees and disciplinary policies against late coming, absenteeism and failure to do school activities are in place. These are clearly communicated to parents and learners.
- The schools are able to manage their facilities and resources effectively (5.6.4.3). The resilient schools have structures and systems in place that helps them to use and maintain the limited resources and facilities they have for learning to occur. The school finances, for example, are managed in terms of the South African Schools Act and the Public Finance Management Act and Treasury Regulations.
- The functioning of the school governing body is effective despite exposure to rural hardships (5.6.5.1). The schools have structures in place that help the SGB to carry out its functions effectively. The functions of the school governing body are clearly defined and effectively implemented. These include drawing up the school's budget and policies.
- There has been sound relationship between the school and community (5.6.5.2). The resilient schools have developed sound relationship with the community and this state of affairs has contributed to effective learning in the resilient schools.
- There has been effective communication between the school and the parents (5.6.5.3). This is crucial for the benefit of learners. The schools are able to establish areas of attention in case of poor performance or bad behaviour by learners. Parents are communicating with the schools on a regular basis.
- The parents are involved in school activities (5.6.5.4). These include fund-raising for the social functions, paying school fees, checking their children's exercises. This is in

line with SASA that requires parents to be involved in school activities, either at home or in school settings. Parents are encouraged to offer their expertise.

6.5 CONCLUSIONS

An empirical investigation involving qualitative field work assisted me in my research to gather authentic data from informants who were considered to be knowledgeable about the culture of learning of their schools in the rural communities of Mpumalanga. In this study I wanted to make explicit what characteristics of resilient schools are and how these characteristics can be implemented to improve the learning culture in rural schools against many odds.

From this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- All schools investigated viewed teaching and learning as their key activity. The schools had well-structured programmes of teaching and learning. Both teachers and learners are committed to teaching and learning despite all odds. The lack of resources and facilities did not appear to be a problem as it used to be the case with some schools in the rural communities of Mpumalanga. Learners had access to timetables for classroom and afternoon studies. The schools in this study had a safe and decent environment for teaching and learning to occur. The schools were clean and fenced. Policies for the safety of learners were in place. Caretakers and security guards looked after the cleanliness of the schools.
- The learners, teachers, principals and parents in this study reflected a sense of accountability. All stakeholders were accountable to one another in terms of their particular responsibilities. Various forms of enforcing accountability were used. For example, administrative documents were used to enforce accountability on teachers while parents were to sign undertakings. Teacher subject files were regularly checked and controlled. The schools in this study had assessment instrument to monitor

teacher performance. Learners explained in their teacher logbooks in case they had not done their homework.

- The school in this study set high expectations for learners. Setting high expectations encouraged the learners to be responsible for their studies as well. The schools conducted standard meetings wherein expectations in respect of academic performance as well as plans for the schools were unveiled. At the beginning of each academic year, learners were informed about the expectations of the school as well as that of their parents. The learners engaged in afternoon and evening studies in an effort to meet the set expectations.
- The principals in this study managed their schools democratically. Their management styles were democratic and participative. They involved teachers in decision-making. They showed willingness to consult teachers on matters related to teaching and learning. Principals created a healthy atmosphere for teaching and learning. School policies were jointly designed. These policies were the cornerstone for the schools in this study. The effectiveness of these schools was attributed to these school policies. Discipline and the use of resources were effectively managed through the use of policies that were in place. The principals initiated sound relationship with the community.
- The learners in this study had a sense of responsibility. They were responsible for their studies. They arrive at school on time and remained at school for the period allocated for tuition. They attended extra classes without being pushed. Class representatives supervised the cleaning of classes and locked them.
- The principals were all open and straightforward when they talked to learners and teachers about their progress and performance respectively. They tell the truth to parents about the progress of their children. They invited parents to school to discuss the expectations of the schools and that of the parents.

- Teachers, principals, learners and parents were working collaboratively and democratically to ensure that the culture of learning remains the core business of their schools. School visions were jointly formulated.
- The shortage of resources did not appear to be a significant barrier to learning. The schools in this study managed to improve the learning culture in spite of the lack of resources and facilities. The schools in this study did not rest on their laurels and wait for the Department of Education to do things for them.

6.6 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, key themes that emerged from qualitative research are synthesised with the main findings.

6.6.1 Teaching and learning

6.6.1.1 Teachers and learners committed to teaching and learning respectively

Through commitment to teaching, teachers aim at turning all learners into successful life long learners and to improve the learning culture for the purpose of achieving the aim of education (5.6.1.1). This is commendable. Their commitment becomes evident in the way they organise their teaching programmes. Findings consistently show that teachers have well-structured learning programmes which aim at improving the learning culture (3.8). They hold extra-classes to assist learners. Learners attend those extra classes. This is in line with the provision of intervention programme in Mpumalanga that requires teachers to help learners after school hours. The afternoon as well as homework timetables are displayed on the classroom notice board (5.6.1.1). This helps the learners to know what to do in the afternoon and during their spare time. These timetables also help teachers to monitor the learners studying, assist and teach where necessary. The fact that teachers are committed to teaching encourages the learners to be responsible for their studies as well (5.6.1.1).

All teachers and principals interviewed agree that thorough planning is a cornerstone for effective teaching and learning (5.6.1.1). Similarly, the learners interviewed all agree that a well-prepared lesson is easy to grasp because the teacher uses various strategies to help them understand (5.6.1.1).

Both teachers and principals interviewed all agree that starting lessons on time helps to maintain discipline and to cover the work for the day (5.6.1.1). Findings show that good teachers are always punctual at school and in class so that there is no class without a teacher because a class without a teacher causes chaos and chaos causes disciplinary problems (5.6.4.2). Both teachers and learners remain at school for the allocated time for tuition. Teachers are aware of their calling i.e teaching. Similarly, learners know that they are at school just to learn (5.6.1.1). This is evident in the way teachers manage their time. They know that once they are in class, learners must benefit maximally from them. Merely sitting in class, marking and doing all sorts of things wont actually bear the fruits.

Findings show that the teachers and principals are aware that a school's vision belongs to everyone in the school and therefore all school activities are anchored to a common vision (5.6.1.1). The learners are involved in meaningful activities aimed at generating interests in them (5.6.1.1). Krovetz (1999:95) states that the challenge for a school that is striving to foster resiliency is to engage all learners in powerful learning activities and in meaningful roles while helping them build the skills necessary to succeed at these activities and roles (2.9.3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the importance of commitment of teachers and learners to teaching and learning, it is recommended that teachers:

- Develop a clear programme of teaching and learning
- Be punctual at school and in class
- Organise extra classes and monitor the classroom activities
- Plan lesson thoroughly

- Start lessons on time
- Engage learners in meaningful activities
- Attend the learning problems of learners

With regard to learners, it is recommended that the learners:

- Be punctual at school and in class
- Attend after school and evening classes
- Remain at school for the allocated time for tuition
- Show respect for teachers

6.6.1.2 Effective learning in spite of the lack of facilities and resources

The research showed that the two schools in this study share similar problems of lack of resources and facilities (5.6.1.2). Mpumalanga is particularly under-resourced (3.5). The situation is especially acute in rural communities. A large proportion of schools is without water, toilets, electricity and telephones. Many schools do not have libraries and computers. The conditions of the buildings at some schools are very poor. Classrooms are overcrowded (3.5).

While the provision of facilities and resources to schools remains an important element in the establishment of a culture of learning (3.5), findings show that there has been effective learning in the two selected schools in spite of the lack of facilities and resources (5.6.1.2). This is mainly because there are structures and systems in place that are used to monitor the use of these resources for the benefit of the learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the fact that many schools are having limited resources and are unable to teach effectively without resources and facilities, it is therefore recommended that:

- A system for monitoring limited resources and facilities be established to maintain the limited resources so that they can sustain for a long time in order for a learning culture to occur
- Learners be a part of resource and building committees in order to instill a sense of responsibility in learners to take care of school assets

6.6.1.3 A safe and decent environment for teaching and learning

The research showed that the selected schools in this study were committed to a safe and decent environment for teaching and learning to occur (5.6.1.3). The safety and the protection of school buildings, learners and teachers are top priorities for these schools. The fencing of the schools and constant monitoring for weapons and drug abuse are indications of commitment of resilient schools to safe environment. The school premises and classrooms are clean. This is an indication of commitment to a decent environment (2.7.2.4).

Findings show that there are safety measures in place to regulate the entry and exit of people into the school (5.6.1.3). Safety committees that consist of parents, teachers and learners are in place. These committees have policies which among other things state clearly that learners are not allow to carry weapons at school. All visitors are to report to the principal's office. Learners are not to be left alone in classes. Classes are to be locked every afternoon. There are security guards that look after the safety and cleanliness of the schools. All grounds are leveled and are not hazardous to the learners (5.6.1.3).

RECOMMENDATION

In this regard, it is recommended that the school:

- Develop policies and procedures regarding learners' health and safety and monitoring tool for evaluating the implementation of these policies

- Regulate the entry and exit of people into the school. In this regard, the use of security guards employed by the Department of Education will be to the advantage to the schools in terms of funds.

6.6.2 Leadership

6.6.2.1 Learners, teachers and parents are reflecting a sense of accountability

Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:95-96) maintain that the demands of both democracy and efficiency require some form of accountability in the school (5.6.2.1). The research showed that teachers, learners, parents and principals in the two schools in this study are accountable to one another (5.6.2.1). Farrell and Law (1999:6) maintain that accountability is closely connected to responsibility, as those who have been given responsibility are asked to account for their performance.

Findings show that for accountability to be realised, monitoring tools such as logbooks, time-book, period attendance registers, explanation books and movement registers for both teachers and learners should be in place. These documents make it easy for principals and SMT members to monitor the behaviour of both teachers and learners in terms of their performance (5.6.2.1). Findings also show that teacher subject files are regularly checked and controlled. Regular departmental meetings as well as staff meetings are held on a regular basis to set standards and also to provide feedback on performance. Learners are capacitated through a set of rules and regulations which set acceptable standards of behaviour. These rules are then used to make learners accountable for their conduct (5.6.2.1).

Various strategies aimed at enforcing accountability on the part of parents are used. These include signing an undertaking to replace any loss incurred as a result of negligence of their children (5.6.2.1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the importance of accountability in relation to a learning culture, it is recommended that:

- Administrative documents such as the time books, period attendance registers, movement registers, explanation books and logbooks for both teachers and learners must be in place to monitor their performance
- The school develops policies which are consistent with the South African School Act (SASA) specifically for teachers. These policies should reflect the job-description of heads of department such as checking all the work done by teachers academically and administratively.
- Teachers should set norms and standards for grades they teach
- The principal should hold departmental meetings with H.O.Ds to provide feedback on teachers performance

6.6.2.2 Setting high expectations encourages learners to be responsible for their studies

The findings show that setting high expectations encourages learners to be responsible for their studies as well (5.6.2.2). The literature indicates that these expectations should be realistic, clarified and implemented consistently (2.9.2). As can be seen in the schools investigated, expectations were realistic and clearly communicated to all learners and teachers. For example, standard meetings wherein expectations in respect of academic performance as well as plans for the school are unveiled (5.6.2.2). This exercise is usually done at the beginning of each term. The learners interviewed indicated that their studies are their priorities. As a result, they arrive at school on time in order not to miss lessons. Learners attend both afternoon and evening classes in order to meet their expectations and that of the school.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- A joint meeting of all stakeholders in the school be held to discuss the expectations for both teachers and learners to ensure that these are clear and realistically attainable

6.6.3 Organisational aspects of the school

6.6.3.1 School policies contribute to effective management of discipline and learning culture

The literature indicates that the school policies are a cornerstone for effective management of discipline. In terms of the South African Schools Act (1996), schools are required to have policies that would enable it to run smoothly (5.6.3.1). These policies are formulated by all stakeholders in the school. As can be seen in the school investigated, the school policies are in place and are formulated by all stakeholders. These policies are linked to the educational vision of the schools (5.6.3.1). Literature indicates that decisions made in the school should be within the confines of the school policies. Findings show that the school policies help to bring order and discipline in the school (5.6.3.1). Learners are committed to their studies. The learners are aware that if they violate the school policy, they are liable for disciplinary action.

RECOMMENDATION

In this regard, it is recommended that:

- Regular meetings where discussions of policy drawn by all stakeholders in the school be held to remind them of the implementation of policies

6.6.3.2 Sound relationships among teachers and learners

Literature on relationships among teachers and learners indicates that sound relationships contribute to the effectiveness of the learning culture. Findings show that there has been sound relationship among teachers and learners in the school investigated (5.6.3.2). Literature on resilient schools shows that there can be no effective learning where there is no mutual trust and respect between teachers and learners. Teachers are approachable and transparent to learners.

RECOMMENDATION

In this regard, it is recommended that:

- An atmosphere of transparency and open discussions must be fostered to build sound relationship among teachers and learners

6.6.4 Management factors

6.6.4.1 The management style of principals

Literature on management indicates that leadership varies from one institution to another and that no leaders or principals lead their schools in the same way (2.4.1). In terms of the South African Schools Act (1996), schools are to be managed democratically. The findings in the school investigated show that the schools are democratically managed. In these resilient schools the views of all stakeholders are considered and implemented. All stakeholders in the school feel free to share their views and to own the decisions taken (5.6.4.1).

RECOMMENDATION

- It is recommended that all stakeholders in the school be encouraged to share their views openly and transparently

6.6.4.2 Management of facilities and resources

The literature indicates that the management of resources and facilities are a central concern for schools (2.6.2.2). The resource management include: finances, administrative equipment and materials, teaching equipment and facilities such as school buildings, playgrounds et cetera. The school governing body, the principal and SMT members are required by law to ensure that these resources and facilities are safely and well kept (2.6.2.6). Findings show that the schools investigated are managing their resources effectively. For example, class representatives are responsible for locking and unlocking the classrooms everyday (5.6.4.3). There are caretakers who are responsible for checking whether all classrooms are locked or not. The schools are able to fix broken windowpanes and doors without departmental assistance (5.6.4.3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- Structures be established to monitor the use of resources and facilities
- Learners and teachers must be encouraged to care of school resources and facilities so that they can sustain for a long time

6.6.4.3 Financial management

The findings show that the schools investigated are managing their finances in terms of the South African Schools Act (1996) and the Public Management Act and Treasury Regulations (5.6.4.4). The South African Schools Act, 1996, make it compulsory for each school to have a governing body that is entrusted with the responsibility to administer the school funds and to draw up a school budget that has as its priority the improvement of the quality of learning and teaching for the benefit of learners (5.6.4.4).

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- The finance committee and the SGB should be in charge of monitoring the use of funds and be guided by the financial policy drawn in line with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and Treasury Regulations
- The SGB must facilitate the process of drawing up the school's budget and presents the financial report to the parents as enshrined in the PFMA

6.6.5 Governance factors

6.6.5.1 Effective functioning of the school governing body despite rural hardships

The findings show that the school governing bodies of schools investigated are able to function well despite exposure to rural hardships (5.6.5.1) such as working far from homes, unemployment and crime and their low level of education. They are able to function well despite all odds because there are structures in place that help the parents to carry out their functioning effectively, for example, finance and cultural committees. Findings indicate that spending is strictly monitored by the finance committees to ensure that the schools strictly adhere to the programmes that promote qualitative learner performance (5.6.5.1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

It recommended that:

- Structures and procedures be established to assist the SGBs in carrying out its functions effectively
- Structures (SGBs, SMTs and LRC) should plan and strategise together and their roles be clarified from time to time

- Feedback from SGB meetings must be communicated to teachers, learners and parents at all times

6.6.5.2 Sound relationship between the school and community

The findings show that there is a sound relationship between the school and the community in the schools investigated (5.6.5.2). This relationship helps to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Literature indicates that governance issues in resilient schools are straightforward (2.6.1.4). Parents are invited to school to observe some of the school activities. Findings show that parents are allowed to have access to its facilities.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- The principal must initiate good relationships with the community

6.6.5.3 Parental involvement

Studies show that parental involvement in the education of their children in rural Africa is generally poor due to some rural backgrounds and histories. Findings show that parents in the schools investigated are actively supporting their children in different forms such as paying school fees, checking their children's exercises to establish whether their children have done their school work or not (5.6.5.4). Parents are required by law to be involved in school matters such as to know how the school functions in terms of tuition and funds. The problem is that some principals and teachers are unable to work with parents. Sometimes the role of parents in schools is not clearly defined.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- The principal together with the SMT formulate a policy on how to deal with parents
- Teachers and principals encourage the parents to be involved in the education of their children
- Parents must play a critical role in ensuring commitment, discipline and academic performance of learners, e.g. checking academic work, learner attendance, etc

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to two secondary schools in the Mpuluzi circuit of the Eerstehoek District, which consists of five circuits. In each school the empirical investigation was limited to the principal, three teachers, twelve learners, two parents who are serving on the school governing body. The circuit manager was part of preliminary investigation only although he has a role to play in the school-based management that can influence the culture of teaching and learning. Although the findings were context bound, but nonetheless rich data were generated.

The validity and reliability of the research results might have been limited by:

- The data relating to the Mpumalanga Department of Education have been inadequate and thus the data obtained on the contextual realities of schooling in Mpumalanga was also limited.
- In all qualitative studies issues of loyalty to the Department and fear because of power relations impacted on participants and therefore might give rise to limited responses, in some instances. However, because I have established good rapport with participants, this effect was successfully limited.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate those aspects of the learning culture of resilient schools which are particularly beneficial for schools within rural communities in Mpumalanga. The aim was to make explicit what characteristics of resilient schools are and how these characteristics can be implemented to improve the culture of learning in rural schools against many odds. The data demonstrated that there is no distinctive aspect of the culture of learning of resilient schools because all aspects are interrelated and interdependent. This study discovered that the most effective aspect which benefits the culture of learning in resilient schools, was the involvement of all stakeholders in managing and maintaining whatever resources were available in the school.

The availability of school facilities in Mpumalanga (48,4%) is below the national average of (52,6%) (3.5). The government's policy to decentralise decisions to school level will not automatically produce the desired outcomes as discussed in 1.1. However, this study showed that some schools are able to function well, despite all odds.

The main thrust of this study has revealed that two factors are pivotal, namely the commitment of teachers and learners and secondly the way principals, the management teams and school governing body lead and manage their schools, despite all odds.

Teachers and learners appeared to be committed to teaching and learning respectively despite exposure to an acute shortage of resources. Teachers and learners took the initiative and were able to do certain things for themselves.

From the findings it has been apparent that the leadership styles of principals in the selected two schools in Mpumalanga appear to be democratic, participatory and transparent. Democratic governance and management are the most key features which make schools centres of effective teaching and learning. As a result, all stakeholders are at liberty to offer their expertise. The learning culture is thus maintained and upheld.

6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The factors that contribute to the culture of learning of resilient schools in rural communities in particular are many and varied. Many factors relating to the learning culture of resilient schools in rural communities require more detailed research. Thus, the following areas are suggested for further research:

- Strategies to improve the involvement of parents in school governance in rural communities
- Parents' level of education and its impact on school governance in rural communities
- The influence of the commitment of parents on learner achievement and hence the learning culture of the school
- The role of the school governing body in the process of implementing the Whole School Development policy
- Accountability and its effect on school improvement

