



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background	2
1.2	Statement of the Problem	5
	1.2.1 Research objectives	5
1.3	Research Approach and Methods	6
	1.3.1 Research approach	6
	1.3.2 Research methods	7
	1.3.3 Definition of terms	7
1.4	Structure of the Report	11

1.1 Background

There is general agreement that education is a basic tool of development. As recently as April 2004 the then Minister of Education was reported as saying:

The need for a competent, dedicated and caring workforce, whose interests lie in the overall long-term of development of the country's resources is vitally important ... Teachers are the initial sowers of the nation's human resources capital (Mabasa 2004:3).

Educational standards are thus of universal concern, but there is nothing particularly universal about the standards themselves – although in Europe, for instance, the new economic unity is imposing some kind of unity of educational standards, expressed unequivocally in terms of economics (Tulasiewicz & Brock 1994:7). In the United States of America reference is made to “the general deterioration of standards which has by now become systemic” (Murchland 1990:1). What emerges from both these studies is that there is a growing divergence between the ultimate aims of education, and the ways in which educational performance is measured. This is expressed by McKenna (1994:8) as follows:

What do we want kids to know and be able to do at various stages in their education? And how do we measure if kids have mastered content and performance expectations so defined?

The arguments imply that if performance measures are keyed to aims which have become outdated, it cannot be expected that current learners will meet the standards set if they and their teachers subscribe to new aims. It becomes very important to examine standards in a way that directly relates to aims.

The growth of information technology has ensured that matching performance to aims has become more complex. Originally in the United States of America entry to tertiary institutions was the accepted measure of performance

success (McKenna 1994:8). More recently the California Department of Education (2001), for example, has called on a variety of indicators to assess performance, over and beyond the usual scholastic assessment test (SAT) scores, including dropout rates and college attendance figures. Something similar is also reported for Florida, where course choice, race and gender were also added into the equation (Roth, Crans, Carter, Ariet & Resnick 2001). Elsewhere the measurement of reading skills is seen as a prime indicator of educational achievement (Terrance 1997:311). Science and mathematics, however, might seem as if not covered by this. A large project in Jamaica again looked at five 'integrated science process skills' and found that this kind of performance very clearly related to school type (Beaumont-Walters & Soyibo 2001).

The underlying message seems to be that in measuring performance, one must carefully consider aims, and that these may substantively differ from time to time and from place to place. It is possible however to generalize that in considering performance, the overriding requirement is to consider to what extent performance measures reflect new or current curricula.

From year to year there is considerable debate in South Africa over both appropriate curricula and levels of performance, which are supposed to interconnect. The question is whether they do and also whether they did in the past. In this regard one needs to consider whether matriculation endorsement as the requirement for university entrance sufficiently predicts success at university level.

Of the nine South African provinces, the Limpopo Province produced the worst Grade 12 results between 1994 and 2006. A spokesperson for the Limpopo Province Education Department (Lediga 1997), acknowledging this, indicated that the Limpopo Province needed extraordinary measures to deal with an extraordinary situation. Such a poor record of Grade 12 results, averaging around 35, 9 per cent between 1996 and 1999, was substantially below what could be countenanced. The next lowest performers were found in the Eastern Cape and Free State Provinces, averaging 45,1 per cent and

44,8 per cent respectively over the same period. However between 2002 and 2006 the lowest performers were Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo as seen on Table no. 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Grade 12 Examination Results According to Provinces
2002-2006**

<i>PROVINCE</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>Average</i>
Western Cape	86.5	87.1	85	84.4	86.7	85.90
Northern Cape	89.9	90.7	83.4	78.9	76.8	83.94
North West	67.8	70.5	64.9	63	67	66.60
Mpumalanga	55.8	58.2	61.8	58.6	65.3	59.90
Limpopo	69.5	70	70.6	64.9	55.7	66.10
Kwazulu Natal	70.8	77.2	74	70.5	65.7	71.60
Gauteng	78.1	81.5	83.7	74.9	78.4	79.30
Free State	70.7	80	78.7	77.8	72.2	75.80
Eastern Cape	51.8	60	53.5	56.7	59.3	56.20

(Adapted from DoE (2008))

Mukwevho (1997:16) maintains that the high failure rate in the Limpopo Province may be attributed to factors such as lack of resources, teacher morale, rationalisation and redeployment. Mkandawire (1999:43) concludes that a high failure rate is attributable to factors such as high pupil-teacher ratio, underqualified teachers and poor provision of facilities. This was echoed by Professor Kader Asmal, then Minister of Education, in his "Call to action: mobilizing citizens to build a South African Education and Training system for the 21st Century" (1999). The Minister indicated that the morale of teachers in all communities is low, mostly because of the uncertainty and distress of rationalization and redeployment. Lack of basic facilities is another factor frequently focused on by the press (Bro 2004:3), and although this is not unique to the province, Limpopo Province has its share of under-resourced schools.

Nonetheless, it must be said that, despite the poor Grade 12 results in the Limpopo Province, statistics reveal that, amongst the thirty-one districts which constitute the Limpopo Province, District Six (Thohoyandou) in Vhembe performed outstandingly well from 1994 to 2006.

The appearance of such good results in Region Three District Six (Thohoyandou and Mutale Districts) against a background of poor ones suggests that it would be appropriate to conduct an investigation into the factors contributing to the particularly good pass rates. Success factors thus revealed may be of assistance to other regions, districts, areas and schools in improving their academic success rates.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Arising from the foregoing, the primary research question to be posed is: Why do Grade 12 learners in the Thohoyandou and Mutale districts of Limpopo Province perform better than Grade 12 learners in other districts of the province?

This study aims to critically examine this phenomenon for the period 2002 to 2006, in order to isolate key factors which may contribute to Grade 12 results. The presence or absence of the identified factors may be verified by comparison with schools in other districts with comparable performances.

1.2.1 Research objectives

This research aims at investigating and analyzing the factors influencing Grade 12 results from 2002 to 2006 in District Six, Region Three of the Limpopo Province.

The study is directed at the following secondary objectives:

- Assessing the influence of an established culture of teaching and learning in schools as a factor contributing to academic success.

- Assessing the influence of time management by both teachers and learners on academic success.
- Comparing the assessment strategies and practices of the schools that performed well, with those that performed poorly.
- Developing a framework of indicator behaviours leading to academic success and testing the prediction value of such indicators by means of a pilot study.

1.3 Research Approach and Methods

1.3.1 Research approach

The study will be based on a quantitative non-experimental *ex post facto* research design, which is to say it will aim to process, quantitatively, information relating to Grade 12 examination results which are already known, namely performance in the matriculation exams in the years 2002 to 2006. Specifically, data will be processed in order to arrive at frequencies that relate to such qualitative information as home environment and motivation.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:285) make the following statement in connection with *ex post facto* research:

The purpose of ex post facto research is to investigate whether one or more preexisting conditions have possibly caused subsequent differences in the groups of subjects. In other words, the researcher looks to conditions that had already occurred (ex post facto is Latin for 'after the fact') and then collects data to investigate the relationship of these varying conditions to subsequent behavior.

Accordingly, this study will seek to examine the data mostly by means of administering questionnaires to teachers where schools and family backgrounds of learners in District Six, Region Three of the Limpopo Province may predict their ultimate achievement in Grade 12. The factors that the

researcher will examine will be selected on the basis of their theoretically presumed relevance as well as their measurability, and correlative tests will be carried out on the data.

This research design will include ethnographic research designed to give qualitative substantiation to factors influencing the same Grade 12 results.

The schools sampled will be selected from the cohort of successful and less successful schools in districts from Region Three as well as in other regions.

1.3.2 Research methods

It is planned to use the following methods to arrive at the objectives described above:

- Questionnaire survey, observations, interviews and an analysis of Grade 12 results in order to identify the factors leading to academic success in District Six of Region Three in the Limpopo Province.
- Interviews, observations and an analysis of official documents in order to identify the culture of teaching and learning in each school.
- Analysis and evaluation of the influence of time management of successful and unsuccessful schools in which questionnaires, interviews and observations may be used.
- Analysis of documents to assess internal policies and practices of schools, in addition to interviews and observations, in order to identify assessment strategies.

1.3.3 Definition of terms

In the context of the Ministry of Education Planning (2000), certain terms have specific meanings.

Region

A province is divided into regions. For example the Limpopo Province is made up of seven regions, namely

- Western (Region 1)
- Central (Region 2)
- Northern (Region 3)
- North East (Region 4)
- East (Region 5)
- Southern (Region 6)
- Bushbuckridge (Region 7)

all of which were established in 2000 (Limpopo Province Department of Education, 2000).

Districts

Each region is made up of districts. For instance the Western Region consists of four districts, the Central Region of six districts, the Northern Region of six districts and District Six known as Thohoyandou. The North-East Region consists of two districts, the Eastern Region of four districts, the Southern Region of six districts and Bushbuckridge, which is Region Seven, consists of three districts.

Area

Each district is made up of areas, each one consisting of a different number of schools.

Culture of Teaching

It is difficult to find a single term that covers an attitude to teaching as well as features of its practice, and the literature generally seems to have arrived at the term 'culture'. For purposes of this research, the term 'culture of teaching' will here be arbitrarily defined as 'a high level of commitment, willingness, preparedness and determination of educators to perform their duties'. A teacher's level of commitment may be difficult to define, but is seen as referring to leadership, strategic planning, customer-first focus, empowerment, commitment to teamwork and continuous improvement, as well as to quality and training (Steyn 2000:269). It is also closely related to a teacher's perception of self-efficacy and ability to maintain academic focus, reduce inappropriate behaviour and assign grading work (Selaledi 2000:259-60). That this has an effect on student performance is well recognized in the literature (Masutha & Ackermann 1999:246, Selaledi 1999:266. These attributes are further discussed in Chapter 2 under the headings of 'school factors' and 'teacher factors'.

The 'culture of teaching' has a close connection with the 'school culture', as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2. Steyn and Van Wyk (1999:39) for instance, consider the following as important factors in teacher job satisfaction, and therefore impacting on the culture of teaching:

- physical working conditions,
- support by the educational authorities,
- job security and teachers' salaries;
- interpersonal relations,
- appreciation/recognition,
- school culture,
- environmental factors,
- nature of work and workload, and

- physical and emotional effects of all these on teachers – finding that the socio-economic environment in which teachers work and particularly the absence of telephones can have a profound effect.

One could even extend the definition of the culture of teaching to include the ability of a teacher to innovate and improvise in the absence of more standard resources (Van Rooyen 2000), given the background of disadvantage suffered by most schools in South Africa.

Culture of Learning

Likewise, for the purposes of this study, the term ‘culture of learning’ will be defined to mean a high level of commitment, willingness, preparedness and determination of learners to learn, including their willingness and preparedness and determination to be taught. As discussed in succeeding chapters, especially Chapter 2, this relates to a whole constellation of pupil-related factors, such as intelligence and verbal skills, language, motivation, background culture, gender, parental involvement, home environment, type of early education, expectations, self-assessment, participation, and study skills. Discipline is also often an issue, needing to deal with attention-seeking, a desire for power, revenge and a display of inadequacy on the part of individual learners (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000:35), all of which interfere with the culture of learning in a school.

Democratic Education System

According to Dekker and Van Schalkwyk (1995:457):

The democratic era commenced with the democratic elections of April 1994 when a non-racial education system based on equality was instituted.

The idea was to revolutionize the entire school system in post-apartheid South Africa, in the light of the fact that so many people were being disadvantaged

by what they saw as an outdated, cruel and inhumane system, dramatically expressed in Soweto on 16 June 1976 (Mkandawire 1999).

In the context of the current study, a democratic education system will imply the newly established Education Department which was constituted after the democratic elections of 27 April 1994, but it should not be supposed that earlier systems do not still have any effect on the performance of learners as well as on teachers. This is made very clear in the issues explored by Van Rooyen (2000; see also Mosoge & Van der Westhuizen 1997).

The School Management Team

In this report the term 'the school management team' refers to the manager (principal), deputy manager and the heads of departments. It is this team that must collaborate in achieving the total quality management considered to be a vital part of the culture of teaching and of the school (Steyn 2000:47). Apart from anything else, it is considered that if teachers do not have access to the school's decision-making process, their feelings of disempowerment may impact on the whole school (Mosoge & Van der Westhuizen 1997).

1.4 Structure of the Report

The research will be reported in six chapters which will be presented as follows:

Chapter 1

This chapter contains an exposition of the background to the research problem, statement of the problem, research objectives, research approach, methods and structure of the research.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2 a review of the research literature relating to the cultural and historical background, and school and teacher factors influencing Grade 12 results will be undertaken in order to establish a theoretical understanding of and a basis for developing research instruments.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 a review of the research literature relating to the learner factors such as language, motivation, family background influencing Grade 12 results will be undertaken in order to establish a theoretical understanding of, and a basis for developing research instruments.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4 there will be a discussion and rationale for the research design and methodology.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 will indicate data presentation and statistical analyses of the results.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 will summarize the research and the conclusions to be drawn, and make recommendations for further research and, where applicable, future policy on Grade 12 education.

Appendices

Research instrumentation

Results

Other informative documents.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH RELATING TO CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, SCHOOL AND TEACHER FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN SCHOOLS

2.1	Introduction	14
2.2	Historical and Social Context	16
	2.2.1 Language and culture	16
	2.2.2 Vhavenda history	16
	2.2.3 The effect of apartheid	18
2.3	School Factors	19
	2.3.1 Locality	19
	2.3.2 School culture	20
	2.3.3 Funding	23
2.4	Teacher Factors	24
	2.4.1 Training	24
	2.4.2 Classroom management	25
	2.4.3 Teacher motivation	30
	2.4.4 Language	32
2.5	Conclusions	33
	2.5.1 Locality of the school	33
	2.5.2 School culture	34
	2.5.3 School funding	34
	2.5.4 Teacher training	34
	2.5.5 Classroom management	35
	2.5.6 Teacher motivation	35
2.6	Summary	35

2.1 Introduction

Education is

not about empty minds waiting to be filled, nor about flatulent teachers discharging hot air. It's about the opposition of teacher and student. It's about what gets rubbed off between the persistence of the one and the resistance of the other (Swift 1983:221).

In considering the factors which successfully influence Grade 12 results in the area and time-frame covered by the current study, it would obviously be best to consult research and related literature that deal specifically with (a) success factors in schools and (b) South African schools.

It would seem, however, that not much research has been done that overlaps both these areas. The most relevant would seem to be the research by Dlangalala (2000), Madolo (1995), Mostert (1998), Myburgh, Grobler and Niehaus (1999), Ramashala (1999) and Semanya (1997). Relevant work was also done by Chetty (1996) and Zangqa (1999), further discussed below, although the work of both suffers from the disadvantage of a small sample size and consequently the reliability of their conclusions, which seem rather trite. Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000) utilized a large sample and considered many important variables, but related these to the exercise of discipline rather than to academic performance, and in a similar way Heystek and Louw (1999) limited their conclusions to levels of parental participation and not to results.

It should be noted that where South African research is concerned, the emphasis seems to be on accounting for poor performance, and not identifying the factors which account for success. This different approach may well have the effect of directing attention away from what might be most helpful to learners themselves.

Sometimes suggestions can arise from the criticisms of course. In a minor study conducted in three schools in a more distant district – Zebediela – of the same province being considered by this study, the findings were summarized as follows:

Reasons for poor Grade 12 results

- Lack of discipline
- Lack of culture of hard work
- Late supply of textbooks
- Condonement: pass one, pass all
- Abolishment of corporal punishment
- Lack of commitment by teachers and learners
- Shortage of teachers
- Lack of parental involvement
- Overcrowding in the classrooms
- Shortage of facilities
- Unavailability of syllabi
- Inefficiency of inspectors
- Underqualified teachers
- Lack of motivation by teachers and learners

(Ramashala 1999:46-47)

Similar findings emerged from a study of eight sample schools in the Free State (Mostert 1998).

The most accessible literature seems to deal with American research. It is not strictly applicable in the South African context – especially not the context of recent years of transformation in South Africa – but it does give some indication of the different elements contributing to academic success. Since these elements are usually dealt with separately in the range of studies reviewed here, it would seem sensible to consider them under the related headings of school factors, teacher factors and learner factors.

These, obviously, can be further subdivided for more detailed consideration, and this is the strategy followed here, with the recognition that learner factors are the most numerous, and dealt with in the next chapter separately. It is also recognized that in looking for overall trends, it is not always appropriate to look at factors that are specific only to individuals and not to groups. This study is concerned with group behaviour.

2.2 The Historical and Social Context

This study is also specifically concerned with a particular region of the Limpopo Province. It can be assumed that the history of the region would have some bearing on attitudes to and outcomes of the various approaches to education. Thus it is worth considering, first of all, what elements of the history and social context would have such a bearing.

2.2.1 Language and culture

The majority of the people in this region call themselves 'Vhavenda', and almost all are fluent in the Tshivenda language even when they do not consider it their mother tongue. Other language groups, in order of importance, are Shangaan (XiTsonga), SePedi and SiNdebele – with very diverse origins and so not readily seen as easily coming together. For children whose first language is one of these four, their second and even third language would be others from the same group of four. English and Afrikaans would seldom be encountered outside school except in the context of employment. These two languages, then, would not be encountered by school children except inasmuch as they may have grown up on white-owned farms. In such cases Afrikaans would dominate as the next language after the more domestic languages.

2.2.2 Vhavenda history

The predominant history of the region is that of the people who today call themselves Vhavenda and whose language is very clearly related to that of

the Shona people of Zimbabwe. The Limpopo River was obviously never much of a barrier to movement, especially considering that, today, it runs 7-9 months of the year flowing only beneath its sandy bed and not above it. Archaeologists have established that rich settlements around Mapungubwe in the 10th and 11th centuries of the Christian era had close economic and cultural relationships with the contemporary civilization recognizable at Great Zimbabwe some 400 km away. The following centuries brought down traditions that have more to do with conquest than with simple movement of peoples. It is known that probably some time in the 17th century when the pressure of Arab and Portuguese slaving was at its height in the eastern parts of Africa, ambitious war-lords crossed the Limpopo to establish new kingdoms among the local people (Möller-Malan 1953). The royal lineages then established are still influential among the Vhavenda today, having been little disturbed by the 150 years or so of upheaval since their first encounters with the traders, missionaries, farmers and – more disastrously – Boer commandos who began to see the southern area enclosed by the Limpopo River as ripe with opportunity for themselves. The Vhavenda were well protected, not only by their experience in military strategy, but also by their environment of swampy lowlands plagued by malaria and high mountain vantage places which they fortified with stone.

The pride and independence resulting from such a history still has its effect. Although a minority people where the South African totality is concerned, the Vhavenda are concerned to see themselves as second to none, and to prove it. It is no coincidence that other African language groups that have moved into the area have generally been concerned to ally themselves with the Vhavenda, to intermarry and, where feasible, to adopt Venda names and words into their own languages.

In this context a striving for academic achievement is not wholly surprising. What mainly would discourage such a striving is the more recent history of political suspicion and questioning where education policies are concerned.

2.2.3 The effect of apartheid

The systematic discrimination against African-language native language speakers (Troup 1976) hardly needs describing here. It was the blatantly stated policy of the architects of apartheid to provide learners only with as much education as would enable them to be good and obedient workers, and nothing more (Troup 1976:21). That this was an objective virtually impossible to achieve – because literacy alone can open up a world of information and thus grounds for protest – was something that posed serious problems for policy-makers, and caused many convolutions in thinking (Steyn 1999).

The effect of such policies on teaching practice as well as school results has been described by Jarvis, Meek and Shepherd (1995)(see also Van Rooyen 2000), and touches on both teacher motivation as well as the differential funding of schools that continues to this day.

This being said, the very fact that differential education was being offered to learners in the region here considered, among other regions, was reason for the whole notion of formal education to be regarded with suspicion, not least by parents who themselves had received a formal education in rather different circumstances, such as under Christian missionary auspices. Such parents would have been aware of the increasing inferiority of the education on offer; less educated parents would have seen more clearly the alienation from traditions that were being encouraged, and resisted formal education on those grounds. This can also have a carry-over effect on learners themselves, accounting for poorer results (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey 1998).

2.3 School Factors

2.3.1 Locality

The differences between urban and rural schools are discernible and can be important anywhere. Rural schools, almost by definition, have access to fewer resources (Madolo 1995:2; Nash 1980:40). Learners have to undertake longer and more difficult journeys to reach them. Perhaps most important of all, they present difficulties for the teachers: accommodation and transport are limited, and even where shops are available, prices are high and choices absent. For teachers, rural schools on the whole mean discomfort, expense, and separation from their families. That this is a problem common to most South Africans does not make it any less serious for teachers or for schools in general if it impacts on teacher motivation. However, as will be shown when the geographical area in this study is discussed (see Chapter 5, section 5.7.1. on the respondents) in South Africa it is not always easy to define rural and urban.

In the studies conducted by UNESCO,

pupils in rural schools have received lower scores on achievement tests. This can be explained by a number of factors, including lower parental income and educational levels, poorer school infrastructure and facilities, poorly-trained and less experienced teachers and lower expectations on the part of teachers and parents (Chinapah 1997:75).

One of the things missing or in low supply is also apparently sexual knowledge – surprising because teenagers show so much interest in sex – resulting in a higher rate of teenage pregnancies in rural schools, at least in South Africa (Mokgalabone 1999). Even the switch of interest from academic work to sex would negatively affect results. It is also arguable that rural girls are not expected to complete school, being more needed in the home in their

productive as well as reproductive capacity, given the labour-intensive nature of tropical agriculture.

On the other hand urban schools have their own problems, such as violence, which can impact on teacher morale as well as learner performance (Steyn & Van Wyk 1999:41).

It is of interest here that it has been found, for primary schools, that levels of parent participation are greater in rural schools in South Africa than in urban schools (Russell & Elder 1997), and that rural parents, particularly those in the lower socioeconomic brackets, have greater faith in the ability of schools to improve standards of living for their children. In secondary schools the situation is otherwise: urban parents participate more, perhaps because they have fewer transport problems and more children still in school (Heystek & Louw 1999:27), presumably because there is no other work waiting for their children, in contrast with the rural situation.

2.3.2 School culture

Any school with some history of its own will have developed a culture of its own which may relate to the culture of the broader society which it serves, but which has its own dynamic determined, usually, by its principal (Evans 1999:19; Leithwood 1992:95; Steyn & Van Wyk 1999:42) and to a lesser extent its teachers and learners (Steyn 2000). There can be extreme examples, where violence and extortion characterize school culture, particularly in countries like the United States of America. One should not, however, think that South Africa is free of such things, as evidenced by television series such as 'Yizo Yizo' (Selaledi 2000:258; Steyn & Van Wyk 1999:41). The negative impact of such a culture is clear enough:

One of the worst things that can happen to a school is having a reputation as a place where drugs and weapons exist. It frightens students, parents, and the community. It reduces the degree of

support for a school. Teachers become discouraged and lose their enthusiasm for their students ... (Rosen 1997:91),

Substance abuse, in particular, in adolescents has the effect of creating depressive symptoms which can impact negatively upon their work (Blore 2002:93). At the same time, such problems can be very difficult to control (Yarnold 1999).

The extent to which part of a school's culture is the involvement of parents (Bastiani 1989) can make a large difference. Not to be forgotten should also be the matter of the involvement of the learners themselves as well as teachers in school policy-making (Beckmann & Blom 2000; Duffield, Turner & Morris 2000; Mosoge & van der Westhuizen 1997; Scales, Blyth, Berkas & Kielsmeier 2000; Steyn 2000). As has been pointed out, new legislation, in the form of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, "brought about a major reform in education administration by decentralising school governance to local school communities" (Squelch 2000:309; similarly Heystek & Louw 1999:21). The particular culture of different schools may be considered thereby reinforced. Constitutional and legislative changes, however, also make a difference to the rights and duties of learners within the system, requiring in turn, among other things, "the need for strong support of firm discipline in the schools (or the implementing of school rules)" (Van Staden 2000:302). That this may not be difficult to achieve is suggested by the findings of the study conducted by Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:37), who found that learners and parents had similar views on discipline, differing only on matters of expulsion and suspension.

Some caution must be exercised here; in the small study of three schools conducted by Ramashala (1999) in Zebediela – a part of Limpopo Province some distance from the one being studied here – there was a distinct tendency for each element of the school hierarchy to blame the other for poor performance. Area inspectors blamed the principals, teachers and parents; school principals blamed policy, teachers and parents; teachers blamed policy, area inspectors, principals, parents, learners; parents blamed teachers

and learners; and learners largely blamed government policy and parents (Ramashala 1999:29-42). It is interesting, in the latter case, that they did not blame their teachers, as is so often reported by teachers themselves.

In so far as school culture makes a difference to individual results (Bryant 1998; Hawkins 1997; Haynes Emmons & Ben-Avie 1997; Newmann 1998; Wang, Haertel & Walberg 1997), this clearly relates to the component of a teacher's classroom management (discussed below) which to some extent will reflect the broader school culture, and where the culture has an adverse effect on results, therapies are available (Finnan 1994).

The matter of schoolwide discipline (Rosen 1997; Van Staden 2000) is still relevant here, as rules and codes of conduct may be determinants of the school culture, and discipline generally is a notion that is important to parents and politicians as something they expect of school administrators. As a result the reasons for exercising discipline are not always as straightforward as one might suppose:

Schools suspend students not so much to improve the behaviour of the students who do not follow the rules as to reinforce the norms for proper behaviour set forth by the adult community ... If students are to transfer their school experience to living in adult society, they must learn to live with rules and laws (Rosen 1997:5; see also Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000:37).

For schools themselves, there are various indicators of what constitutes good rules, but it is significant in the light of the above that a model code of conduct for learners (Rosen 1997:15-22) does not only consider bad behaviour, but is required to include –

- Student responsibilities
- Student rights
- Student privileges

with a list of violations and consequences (not punishments) – also mentioning the possibility of positive rewards for outstandingly good behaviour.

A school's ability to keep good records (Rosen 1997:32) is a crucial aspect of this and other aspects of school culture.

2.3.3 Funding

Although there are a number of current examples of poorly resourced schools that are attaining virtual miracles of achievement, in the long term and on a day-to-day basis, lack of adequate funding can have a disastrous effect on achievement because it makes everything much more difficult and thus demoralizing (Zangqa 1999:96). A science teacher without a laboratory can teach a great deal of science, but has difficulty preparing learners for examinations where equipment is a given. A school without a library (and a good librarian to run it) cannot honestly encourage independent enquiry among learners who are hardly likely to have a good collection of informative books and magazines in their own homes. These days the use of computers must be added to the necessary skills.

In the study conducted by Van der Westhuizen, Mentz, Mosoge, Nieuwoudt, Steyn, Legotlo, Maaga and Sebego (1999:318), "Lack of resources ... features very strongly as a cause for the poor Grade 12 results ... (and) seems to be the greatest factor in poor and average schools".

In this respect private schools are bound to have an advantage (Chinapah 1997:76), since their resources are fees-related, and their fees high enough to pay good teachers. They would not dare to allow their schools to be underresourced.

2.4 Teacher Factors

Teachers do not function on their own; they are part of the school culture however difficult that is to describe. Their interaction with learners, determines their behaviour and vice versa.

If teachers are suffering from lack of self-confidence, this can have a very negative impact. In a small two-school study conducted in KwaZulu Natal, the frustration engendered in teachers by uncertainties concerning the future was seen as the main contributor to failure. The high incidence of HIV & AIDS among teachers was seen as one of the sources of uncertainty, although it may be going too far to say: "Most of the educators and learners in the area are AIDS victims" (Dlangalala 2000:45).

It remains true, however, that teacher self-esteem may be a very important factor and is based on various platforms, such as the skills and background of each teacher.

2.4.1 Training

As in the case of location and funding, so does the level up to which teachers are trained, have its effect on the efficacy of teaching. Learners are very quick to spot inadequacies in their teachers, and will constantly challenge levels of knowledge in their teachers. Both learners and teachers need to be confident that these challenges can be met, and yet the history of teacher shortages over the years, whatever the cause, has resulted in policies of hiring teachers without proper qualifications for their task.

At the same time it must be recognized that the training a teacher receives may not always be relevant to the situation that teachers may have to face, in terms of school or classroom (Steyn & Van Wyk 1999:41). What a teacher learns in college may be so different from the knowledge and experience of fellow teachers, especially the senior teachers and school principal, that the

new teacher is made to feel isolated in ignorance (Aitken & Mildon 1992:32; Tickle 1994:3), thus impacting on motivation, as described below. At the other extreme, trained and experienced senior teachers may find themselves isolated and at sea by changes in school or national policy regarding curricula and discipline (Sikes 1992:49).

Teacher training does not only take place in colleges, but also as a result of teaching experience, which is often most valuable because it is the most relevant. Teacher development may be in the hands of a school principal or some other supervising professional acting as counsellor or broker (Steyn, 1999a:209; Tickle, 1994:163)

It has also been argued that one shortcoming in teacher training programmes has been the essential issue of discipline, regarded by teachers themselves as very important (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000; Steyn & Van Wyk 1999:41).

2.4.2 Classroom management

The management of classroom space and activity has only recently become recognized as a key factor in school learning, and has not yet been given much attention in the curricula of teacher training, and much of the research and reporting so far seem to relate to situations outside South Africa (Bryant 1998), although the use of audiovisual materials is a well researched subject (Van Rooyen & Hartell 2000). It does relate very closely to teacher efficacy (Selaledi 2000:261), and is discussed further under motivation of teachers (section 2.4.3.). For some individuals the necessary skills may come intuitively, but obviously it would be more reliable to ensure that they are taught, although it is no more than common sense to say that “if the situation in which one is placed conveys the positive perception of a feeling of

belonging, where one has a meaningful function, then it results in a feeling of self-worth which promotes academic achievement” (Chetty 1996:181).

Classroom learning activities should not be so low-level that they provide insufficient challenge. Naturally, they also should not be so difficult that students never experience success (Heacox 1991:21).

In training textbooks on the subject (Weinstein 1996:89; see also Hauser & Thompson 1995), the strategy clearly also relates to pupil motivation, discussed further in section 2.5.3. Appropriate classroom management can, among other things, enable learners to interact with each other and also respond in active ways, thus contributing to motivation (Weinstein 1996:89), and even to the curriculum (Koshewa 1999: 211).

The exercise of discipline within the classroom and its effect on individual learners comes under this heading, although it is closely related to the matter of school culture (section 2.3.2.). Recent changes in the law require that discipline in schools now conforms much more closely to the national constitution in terms of fairness and reasonableness, but more specifically requires -

- Hearing and notice
- Impartial tribunal
- Right to information
- Right to representation
- Reasons for the decision
- Right to appeal

(Squelch 2000; also Van Staden 2000).

Such changes may be seen as creating difficulties for schools and teachers, in that :

An educational climate which places emphasis only on rights without equal emphasis on responsibilities would seem to be incompatible with the term 'education', and would therefore prove to be disadvantageous to the disciplined climate required for such education to occur. The danger exists that an authentic relationship between educators and learners could simply slide to one of distance and non-involvement, a problem already experienced in many parts of the world (Van Staden 2000:302).

Teachers themselves, of course, must have responsibilities as well as rights (Beckmann & Blom 2000:4; Koshewa 1999; Van Staden & Alston 2000), although a teacher's ability to feel in control of a classroom can have a bearing on all the rest (Steyn 2000:269).

Discipline, however, varies and leads to different outcomes (Rogers 1998):

When the underlying motivation of discipline is control and punishment rather than an opportunity for learning, little will be accomplished (Nelsen et al. 1993:10),

and this is reinforced by the perception of parents and learners that

when teachers prepare their lessons thoroughly and present them meaningfully, this increases pupils' participation in class and their commitment to learning, thereby minimizing discipline problems (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000:37)

while "Teachers regard the ability to control a class as a matter of prime importance" (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000:37).

One possible form of discipline is 'positive discipline' where self-discipline is promoted through empowerment techniques such as class meetings that encourage a number of skills (Nelsen, Lott & Glenn 1993: 4), including:

- Intrapersonal skills which seek to understand personal emotions,
- Interpersonal skills which seek to listen, communicate, co-operate, negotiate, share and empathize with others,
- Strategic skills which seek to use responsibility, adaptability, flexibility and integrity in responding to the limits and consequences of everyday life,
- Judgement skills which seek to use wisdom and appropriate values in evaluating situations.

All of these, as can be seen, have to do with conflict resolution in one way or another, and are life skills. A related approach is to see the matter as one of contracts actually to be signed between school and learner (Rosen 1997:38-40), in which, presumably, the teacher would serve as judge/ mediator/ arbitrator, as "different students disobey school rules for different reasons and may therefore need different consequences" (Rosen 1997:30; similarly Rogers 1994: Ch. 3 & 6).

A teacher's own behaviour is most potent when seen by learners as embracing respect and care for learners (Koshewa 1999:25; Nelsen *et al.* 1993:13) and may be conceived as a question of balance between dominance and submission, opposition and co-operation, the appropriate mix being different for every subject, as would be the arrangement of space (Weinstein 1996:73). It is hardly surprising that the co-operation dimension is the one most associated with positive learner attitudes (Weinstein 1996:74). "There is a big difference between punishment and holding kids accountable with dignity and respect" (Nelsen *et al.* 1993:87), and the 'logical consequences' of any unwanted behaviour are explored. This ensures that both teachers and learners are part of the process of solution.

This relates to the notion of teamwork (Koshewa 1999; Steyn 2000), which involves such things as shared decision-making and trust-building with the teacher, and is not at all the same thing as the more familiar group work.

The expectations of teachers concerning their learners can have very direct effects on the learners:

Inaccurate expectations often are not corrected because teachers create situations in which only confirming evidence is possible. For instance, teachers sometimes develop strong 'theories' about students and structure the learning environment in a way that does not allow information that is contrary to their theory to emerge Students' opportunities can be limited severely by teachers' unchallenged assumptions (Stipek 1988:207).

Teachers will often treat high achievers – and also girls – very differently (Stipek 1988:215), and this differential treatment can be expected to have differential effects. If more is expected of high achievers, such learners will respond with better results.

Rathvon (1999:11) sees the problem of classroom management in ecological terms:

An environmentally based approach that views student problems as arising from student-environment mismatches not only expands the analysis of factors that may be contributing to those problems but also yields a broader range of targets for classroom-based interventions.

and thus a pro-active classroom approach is recommended (see also Koshewa 1999; Rogers 1994).

2.4.3 Teacher motivation

Worldwide, shortage of teachers is a worry (Menter, Hutchings & Ross 2002):

The recruitment and retention of teachers is a problem for many nations today. With education playing such a central part in economic and social development, shortages of teachers can create a major political threat to governments (Menter 2002:1).

That this may be cyclical in its manifestation and related to economic prosperity may only make matters worse, and countries badly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic have an even more serious problem. The recruitment of teachers into training or even back from retirement is closely related to what incentives are possible – in other words, to motivation.

Motivation is a condition, or the creation of a condition, that encompasses all of those factors that determine the degree of inclination towards engagement in an activity (Evans 1999:7).

The motivation of teachers has already been touched on, especially with respect to school culture and locality in sections 2.3.1. and 2.3.2. It is not enough that an individual be motivated to adopt teaching as a profession; the motivation to be an effective teacher can be an additional factor. It can aptly be stated that having knowledge of a subject is very far from the ability to convey that knowledge or to motivate others to acquire it. It follows that a teacher lacking in motivation will, in turn, fail to motivate learners, to the detriment of their learning.

It is hardly surprising that job satisfaction has a role here, and dimensions of this may be the following: (Evans 1999; Mosoge & Van der Westhuizen 1997; Steyn & van Wyk 1999; van Zyl & Pietersen 1999) –

- Physical working conditions
- Support by the educational authorities
- Job security and salary
- Interpersonal relations
- Appreciation/recognition
- School culture
- Environmental factors (such as home environment of learners)
- Nature of work and workload

To some extent a teacher's own culture is operative here. Burnout in Afrikaans-speaking women teachers seemed to occur because of the "problems and uncertainties" connected with the "present period of transition and transformation in education" (Van der Linde, Van der Westhuizen & Wissing 1999:196; similarly Steyn 2000), which, it seems, has not only been affecting white teachers (Rigsby, Bennet & Boshoff 1996; Zangqa 1999:95), where stress is experienced at greater levels by teachers who are women and who are married (Van Zyl & Pietersen 1999:76-77). It may also relate to the effectiveness or otherwise of classroom management (Selaledi 2000:261).

Various definitions of teacher efficacy exist: the extent to which teachers believe that they have the capacity to affect student performance, teacher's beliefs about the general relationship between teaching and learning, or the individual teacher's assessment of his/her own teaching competence (Selaledi 1999:266). In fact Selaledi (1999:268-9) found that "primary school teachers obtained significantly higher self-efficacy scores than the secondary school teachers", seemingly because of greater time spent with their learners, enabling them to form better relationships. In general, teacher efficacy correlates with teaching experience and classroom management (Selaledi 2000:261).

In recent years much attention has been paid to COLTS (Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service) as something that should be promoted in schools in order to bring about improvement, and it could be argued that this relates directly to teacher motivation. Van der Westhuizen *et al.* (1999:318) go so far as to cite “lack of a culture of teaching ...as one of the main causes of the high failure rate in Grade 12”. Conclusions like these would be more useful, perhaps, if they were more specific about what the culture of teaching should really be.

Related to this is the way in which learners see their teachers, and the differences in culture between learners and teachers (Sanacore 2000). Masutha and Ackermann (1999:247) conclude from their study that “the teacher plays a major role as a significant other in the lives of learners, particularly those in disadvantaged communities.” Furthermore, “the teacher should act as and be perceived by learners as a major source of support and as a facilitator of learning and development, in contrast with the traditional approach of the teacher as being primarily an ‘instructor’” (*Ibid.*: 247). Following this line of thought, it can be seen from the results extracted by Selaledi (1999:269) that in this respect primary schools have an advantage over secondary schools because in the former the teacher plays more of a parental role, and so teachers adapt more easily to facilitation as a replacement for instruction.

In secondary schools, by contrast, it is perhaps more true that teacher motivation can be strongly affected by school culture and, particularly, the attitude and experience of the school principal (Leithwood 1992), and the extent to which teachers themselves can participate in the management of the school (Mosoge & Van der Westhuizen 1997).

2.4.4 Language

Teachers may be handicapped by their own language or at least an inadequate range of vocabulary when their own language is not English, given

that the medium of instruction usually needs to be English (Mostert 1998:127). At the same time it should be borne in mind that language is a reflection of culture, and in the case of those teachers whose home language is TshiVenda, it can be expected that the positive attitudes to learning found among the VhaVenda would outweigh the difficulties of teaching in a second or third language. This therefore is another way in which school culture will have an effect.

2.5 Conclusions

To account for academic success anywhere, it is evident that certain factors can be core indicators. Some are more measurable than others, and in an investigation such as this one, it is only sensible to use those that are measurable. Bearing in mind (as argued in Chapter 4) that the chief respondents in this investigation are to be teachers, and using the subdivisions employed in this chapter, some indicators considered to be useful are listed as subheadings in this section.

It will be seen that some of the factors already discussed will be ignored. These factors cannot be measured sufficiently well through the methods and instruments that are to be used for this investigation. Further limitations are discussed in Chapter 4, although the object is to range as widely as possible over the factors in order to find meaningful correlations with the performance levels of learners in the area of study.

2.5.1 Locality of school

It needs to be known whether the school is rural or urban. In South Africa determining this can be a little problematic, as many rural areas are populated densely enough to seem urban in all but their infrastructures – and the infrastructures are changing fast (Silistshena 1990). Teachers and learners both might vary a great deal in whether they see the school as rural or urban, depending on their own definitions of these terms. A more objective measure may be the distances that learners have to travel to school: rural populations

being so much more scattered would mean that a greater number of learners would travel long distances.

2.5.2 School culture

Quantifiable measures of school culture would obviously be difficult to obtain, but the presence or absence of some kind of code of conduct, especially if written, would be one such measure, as would the presence or absence of a council or committee of teachers or learners. A school's ability to keep good records would be another measure, perhaps reflected in the presence or absence of an administration block. Another might be the origins of the motivation of teachers irrespective of whether they feel supported or not. It is also not difficult to elicit quantifiable information on what are perceived to be the most common problems affecting the school.

2.5.3 School funding

As school finances have a direct effect on the resources enjoyed by a school, some quantification of them can be attempted, in terms of number of classrooms, laboratory and also the equipping of such rooms. The presence or absence of a library is another indicator, as is the state of its bookstock. The presence or absence of a good librarian would also indicate level of funding, but impact, too, on the literacy of the learners. It also impacts on the abilities of the teachers to encourage independent learning, and their classroom management (section 2.5.5.).

2.5.4 Teacher training

The level of formal teacher training is easy to quantify, provided that teachers are honest about this.

2.5.5 Classroom management

Although the matter of classroom management is difficult to define, certain aspects have been mentioned, and these can be measured: the use or otherwise of visual aids; whether or not learners have the opportunity for discussion with each other as well as the teacher; whether or not their time is structured. Where discipline is concerned, it may be determined whether or not and to what extent there is learner participation in the decision-making where both culpability and punishment are decided.

2.5.6 Teacher motivation

Teacher motivation would be even more difficult to measure. A teacher's relationship with learners could be one measure: the establishment of whether or not the teacher feels well liked and accepted. Also relevant is the question of support from fellow educators, and whether or not any praise or rewards are available. Physical working conditions are subsumed under the measures Adapted for funding (see section 2.5.3.), but also operate here.

2.6 Summary

To separate a school, its teachers and its learners is not always easy, particularly when looking for factors that may affect academic performance. Leaving the matter of learners to the next chapter, from this one it may be concluded that the schools under study (i.e. in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province), the locality of the schools may be important, if it can be determined whether they are rural or urban. School culture, inasmuch as that can be defined, can also be expected to have an effect, and this may also relate to the home language of the teachers, since language and culture are closely related and school culture is not wholly separate from the culture of its source population, which will affect school policies, discipline and the like. The funding level of the schools, in that resources are affected, can also be expected to have some impact.

Where the teachers themselves are concerned, it is argued the level of their training will impact on learner performance, and to some extent this would be reflected in classroom management. However, teacher motivation may have an even greater impact, and again this may relate to the home language and culture of the teachers concerned. Teacher motivation would be even more difficult to measure. A teacher's relationship with learners could be one measure: the establishment of whether or not the teacher feels well liked and accepted. Also relevant is the question of support from fellow educators, and whether or not any praise or rewards are available. Physical working conditions are subsumed under the measures Adapted for funding, section 2.6.3, but also operate here.