CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- The aim of this study was to explore the concept of community education and to investigate methods and techniques that can be implemented to assess the learning needs of individuals and communities in the community education process, in order to provide relevant community education programmes.

- It came out that for the past decades attempts have been made to find ways to address the educational and learning needs of millions of South Africans. These attempts were not very successful hence an educational crisis still exists in our country. In fact, there is a mass of people with educational and learning needs outside of the formal education system who were either denied access to education or who might not have used their educational opportunities optimally.

  It is evident that there is a need for investigation into new educational strategies and educational concepts.

- Community education was defined as the educational process in which the provisions (services, programmes, resources) of all the educational agencies in a community are utilised in a co-operative and co-ordinated manner, to provide for all of the learning needs of all the people of a community, to develop the community and to solve the problems of the community.

- Community education is a practical educational strategy in which members of the community are actively involved in education that is relevant to them and that addresses their needs and problems.

- It was established that the idea of community education is not new - during the past centuries different forms of community education were developed in other countries. However, community education is based on three principles:

  - the determination of objectives and aims according to the interests, needs and problems of people
  - application of a wide range of community, human, physical and financial resources to the development of programmes and activities
  - advancement and practice of democracy in all activities of the school and community.

- Community education can comprise a programme which satisfies the needs of all members of a community at any one time. Furthermore it involves the process of identification of community needs so that the community and its members can grow through social and educational programmes.

- The aims of community education are summarized as follows: to identify and fulfil the needs of community members (basic needs as well as learning needs); adapting and expanding formal, non-formal and informal educational opportunities; development of self-guiding, self-directed communities; community members learn to work together to identify problems and to seek out solutions to these problems; to improve the situation and quality of life of individuals and communities; and to provide equal life opportunities for all.

- The following components of community education were identified: a community-based system for co-ordinated collective action by educational and community agencies; life-long education and learning; community involvement; maximal utilization of community resources; community oriented curricula; and community development.

- In any given community the infrastructure for community education will include the following: a community learning centre; a co-ordinator of community education; advisory councils; and community resources.

- It was found that agencies of community education are imperative for the implementation of the community education concept. There is a wide variety of educational agencies in every community that can be utilised by learners such as: schools, community colleges, technikons, agricultural colleges, career group, museums, mass media, etc. It is therefore the task of the community education co-ordinator to co-ordinate the proper functioning of these educational agencies.

- With regard to the educational provisions of community education it became clear that community education usually begins with some programmes that expand the offerings of schools and other community agencies, e.g. adult basic education and training, after-school recreation, health or social services provided on school premises. It then evolves into a process by which the community identifies and meets its own needs.

- Community education implies that:
  - **community resources** must be utilised to fulfil
  - **community needs** and to solve
  - **community problems**

- It was found that community education implicitly embraces community development. Community development: promotes development in all its forms; is based on local problem solving by collective action; it secures the active co-operation of the people of each community; is concerned with the active participation of all people; involves identification of local problems; and in community development the emphasis is on utilising resources.

- The infrastructure for community education in a given community must include a community learning centre. The community learning centre is a centre where activities extend far beyond the traditional school day and calendar year. It is part of an infrastructure used to deliver highly relevant education and training programmes based on the needs of the community members, and in this centre co-ordination, co-operation and communication with regard to the operation of community education programmes are the key events.

- It was established that in any given community there are usually one or more school buildings that are readily available as part of the infrastructure. The community school concept therefore implies that the school with its facilities assumes a central place in the operation of community education and the school is the centre for the delivery system of community education.

- It is clear that community colleges can widen and at the same time supplement the tasks of community schools. Community college buildings play an important role in the operation of community education programmes. The community college admits all students who can benefit from the programmes and serves as a link for other agencies of community education. It is where people who have left school can re-engage in school activities based on their needs.

- It was discovered that community education is a continual process which includes ten phases. The ten phases of the process must be actualised to ensure that relevant community education programmes are designed and provided to communities.

The community education process is an educational one and is a continuation of formal, non-formal and informal educational programmes in a community. The various phases in the community education process provide the learners in a community with procedures and resources which enable them to obtain information and skills. During the first three phases of the community education

process the focus is on establishing the necessary infrastructure for community education:

Phase 1: Appointment of a co-ordinator of community education

Phase 2: Creating an educational milieu

Phase 3: Establishment of an organisational structure for participative planning

During the next six phases the emphasis is on the planning and bringing into operation of educational programmes:

Phase 4: Identifying and analysing the problems, needs and interests of individuals and institutions in the community

Phase 5: Formulating programme objectives

Phase 6: Designing educational programmes

Phase 7: Identifying and mobilising community resources

Phase 8: Operation of educational programmes

Phase 9: Evaluation of educational programmes, rediagnosis of learning needs, and adjustment of the educational provisions of the various educational agencies in the community

The last phase of the process occurs continuously throughout the whole process, and here the focus is on action research:

Phase 10: Continuous research.

- It was discovered that there is a broad spectrum of learning needs experienced by individual community members. It became evident that all individuals in a community have specific learning needs regardless of their ages, locality and stages of their adult lives. Furthermore, learning needs of individuals also vary depending on the role played by an individual, for example, parent role, employee role, consumer role, citizen or community role.

The following is an indication of learning needs which were identified:

- functional literacy and numeracy skills
- parental and family education
- consumer education
- domestic education
- social coping skills
- raising levels of awareness about existing opportunities
- preparation for vocational, technical and professional competence
- citizenship training
- health matters
- recreation, leisure time and sport
- community resources
- technological skills
- problem-solving skills
- agriculture
- school-based programmes
- environmental education issues.

• In this study the emphasis was on the requirement that first and foremost the learning needs of individuals and communities must be identified and assessed before any community education programme is designed and put into operation.

• It was also established that the assessment of educational and learning needs should not be done in a haphazard manner, instead it should be undertaken in a systematic, formalised and accountable manner.

• The concept of needs assessment refers to any systematic process for collecting and analysing information about the educational needs of individuals, groups, institutions, communities or societies. As an information gathering and analysis process, needs assessment will result in the identification of the needs of individuals and communities.

- It further became clear that for the assessment of educational and learning needs of individuals and communities to be successful, certain methods and techniques are necessary and available for use.

The following methods and techniques were identified and can be applied to assess educational and learning needs for community education programmes:

- **Questionnaires**: The questionnaire is a self-report instrument used for gathering information about learning needs of individuals and groups in a community. The questionnaire can also include factual questions about the respondent, such as age, sex, ethnic group, and occupation; attitudes, opinions, interests, beliefs, aspirations, and expectations; past, present and planned activities in the community; and perceptions of various matters. The questionnaire is generally regarded as a reliable instrument for collecting data on learning needs, it is also suitable where a large group of respondents are involved and if the people are scattered over a wide area.

- **Interviews**: The interview is a direct technique of collecting information on learning needs in a one-to-one situation. Interviewing involves deciding what information you want and from whom, designing a set of questions, and asking them of those people. It is a skill, however, that demands careful preparation and much practice. As a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of communication and collaboration.

- **Survey research methods**: A survey is a form of planned collection of data for the purpose of describing existing learning needs. It is evident that a survey is an operation of some complexity and, therefore, a first requirement is the development of a good plan. It follows that the conduct of survey research should follow a logical process, which in this study is referred to as a 'survey research cycle'. Normally, the success of the research study for the

assessment of learning needs is not guaranteed by following the cycle, but it may enhance confidence in the management of the survey.

- **Research reports**: Research reports also form one of the techniques for collecting data needed for the assessment of learning needs for community education programmes. They are straightforward documents that set forth clearly and precisely what the researcher has done to assess the learning needs of individuals and communities. Of importance is that research reports should be factual and logical by nature.

- **Group discussion**: This is a qualitative research method suitable for assessing learning needs of community members. Group discussion is concerned with actual information (i.e. learning needs) from actual groups, thus attempting to utilise the advantages of group interaction. Group discussion has an added advantage in that the community education researcher attains both individual and group accountability.

- **Observation**: Observation is often the first indication that a problem area or area of interest exists. The degree of precision with which a person observes is determined by that person's interests, needs and previous experience. Observation is simply a more refined means of data collection which serves to clarify or confirm a suspected problem area, hence it is suitably placed for the community education researcher to use when assessing learning needs for community education programmes.

- **Small group techniques**: They represent more informal methods for assessing learning needs of communities. Learning needs are identified, assessed and accepted after a series of discussions. Small group techniques also play a major role in identifying priorities of educational and learning needs for community education programmes.

- **The key-informant method**: This is one of the methods which can be used for the assessment of learning needs of individuals and communities for community education programmes. In this approach, assessment is based on information secured from those persons in the community who are in a position to best know the community, its people, their needs, and the patterns of services being received. In this approach the community education researcher works hand in hand with key-informants. The concept of **Key-informants** refers to knowledgeable persons in the community. In the context of this study, key-informants could include teachers, lawyers, politicians, traditional leaders, youth leaders, business people and many others. These are the people who have different experiences and, therefore, potentially different perspectives regarding the learning needs of their communities.

- **The community-forum method**: It is a method where the identification and assessment of learning needs is based on information obtained at public hearings or by attending a series of public meetings. In this method the first step is for the community education researcher to organise a public meeting where he/she will meet face-to-face with the people, so that he/she can collect information on learning needs, and then make informed decisions. This method usually brings to the fore some of the hidden needs of the community members.

- **The social indicators method**: In this method the identification and assessment of learning needs is based on inferences drawn from statistics found in public records and reports. The essential steps for the community education researcher are the articulation of intended objectives and the determination of what indicators or categories of information would be most useful in assessing the learning needs of a given community. The social indicators method is not a direct assessment of community needs, conditions and opinions.

- **The combination method**: In certain community education studies it becomes necessary to use a combination of methods and techniques for assessing learning needs of individuals and communities. This is where the combination method becomes relevant. In this approach the methods and techniques can be used independently or in combination with each other, depending on the type of information, and on the extent of direct community involvement in the needs survey.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be made:

- As a point of departure learning needs of individuals and communities must be assessed before any community education programme is designed and put into operation.

- The assessment of educational and learning needs should not be done in a haphazard manner, instead it should be undertaken in a systematic, formalised and accountable manner

- For the assessment of educational and learning needs of individuals and communities to be successful, certain methods and techniques are necessary and available for use by the community education researcher.

- Community development secures the active co-operation of the people of each community and is concerned with the active participation of all people in programmes designed to raise the standard of living. Against this background, it can be concluded that community members must be involved in the identification and assessment of learning needs.

- The identification and assessment of learning needs is a pre-requisite for any community education programme to be put into place. It therefore follows that, for any community education programme to address the needs of community members, it must be relevant to the identified needs.

- From the findings it has emerged that community education is a process of planning and bringing into operation of educational programmes in a community. Programmes serve as the most common approach to meeting a learning need identified in the process. The implication is that through the community education process learning needs are identified and community resources are mobilised to address the needs. Learning needs can only be identified and assessed by using certain methods and techniques. These methods and techniques are scientific, systematic and logical by nature. Thus, the central theoretical statement of this study has been verified, namely: **The methods and techniques implemented to assess learning needs of individuals and communities in the community education process can significantly contribute towards providing relevant community education programmes.**

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS RESULTING FROM THIS STUDY

- First and foremost, as a practical educational strategy in which members of the community are actively involved it is recommended that the community education strategy be implemented to address learning needs particularly in the rural and disadvantaged areas of the RSA.

- The main recommendation resulting from this study, is that before delivering any community education programme certain methods and techniques must be used for the assessment of learning needs of individuals and communities.

- It is further recommended that the assessment of learning needs of individuals and communities in order to provide relevant community education programmes, must not be done in a haphazard manner but should be done in a logical, systematical and accountable manner.

- Members of the community must be involved in the assessment of their learning needs. This community participation will promote optimal involvement in the community education process and hence ownership of community education programmes.

- It is recommended that various government departments (i.e. Education and Training, Labour, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, etc) ensure that community education reaches all sectors of a community – children, youth, adults, and the elderly.

- Community education programmes must be relevant to the learning needs of community members. This will be made possible through determining the immediate needs, interests, and problems of the community members.

- It is also recommended that each rural and township community of the RSA appoint a co-ordinator of community education. This person must be trained so that he/she is well-equipped and prepared to take initiatives with regard to community development projects and community education at large.

- The educational agencies available in every community must be properly utilised to assist all its citizens to identify, assess and solve their problems and satisfy their learning needs. It is the task of the community education co-ordinator to co-ordinate the functioning of these educational agencies. The list of agencies would include schools, teacher training colleges, creches, churches, prisons, etc.

- Institutions of higher learning like colleges, technikons and universities must play a significant role with regard to the training of experts for community education, research in community education, guidance, advice, consultation and dissemmination of information on community education.

- It is recommended that since community education involves the identification and mobilisation of financial resources, there is a need for the business sector (businessmen, industry, etc) to be drawn into the picture and to become involved in financial support. Financial resources could include the provision of funds for programme support, and constitutes an important aspect in the operation of educational programmes.

5.4   SYNTHESIS

The writer has, through this study, attempted to investigate and identify methods and techniques of assessing learning needs for community education programmes. When the identified scientific methods and techniques have been used to assess learning needs of community members, relevant community education programmes can be designed and put into operation in order to address the needs of communities and the citizens of the RSA at large.

This research can further be regarded as only the beginning of an extensive situational analysis whereby methods and techniques of assessing learning needs are implemented with a view to the purposeful planning of future community education programmes.