

***THE PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS  
OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES ABOUT THE SUCCESS  
OF COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS IN RURAL AREAS***

***BY  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

**MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS**  
*in the*  
Department of Education Management and Policy Studies  
*at the*  
***University of Pretoria***  
***Faculty of Education***

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***PRETORIA***  
***2007***

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this mini – dissertation to my late mother, **EMMAH MAMONENE (PHELADI)**, who not only brought me into this life, but who laid the foundation of my interest in education. Her continuous encouragement made me what I am today.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*I acknowledge with gratitude the following people whose invaluable contribution made the study possible:*

- *My supervisor, Dr. I. J. (Sakkie) Prinsloo for his clear guidance and unwavering support throughout the study. His expert advice and constant encouragement have made it possible for me to complete this mini – dissertation;*
- *My family: my loving wife Maggy and my three children, Tebogo, Kgaogelo and Mpho for their love, understanding and patience. Without their support this research would have been an insurmountable quest;*
- *Ms Sharon Mampane for her excellent and professional skills in assisting me to submit a presentable and professional document.*
- *My thanks are due to my typist, Salome Moila and all my lecturers.*
- *A word of appreciation and gratitude to Dr. B. Malan for editing this work.*
- *Finally, to The Almighty who has graciously provided me with an opportunity for self development and study and the strength to use these opportunities to the fullest.*

***Honour, Praise and Glory unto Him!***

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

*I, Molau Charles Mosehle (Student Number: 99290074) hereby declare that this mini – dissertation, “THE PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES OF COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS IN RURAL AREAS”, one of the requirements for the fulfillment of the degree Magister Educationis at the University of Pretoria, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other University.*

*I declare that the work contained herein is my own and that all the sources I have used or quoted are indicated and fully acknowledged as references.*

.....  
*CHARLES MOSEHLE*

.....  
*DATE*

## SUMMARY

*The question of which kind of education might be most appropriate to African rural development or the African poor has exercised the minds of stakeholders and the South African government for some time, particularly in the new dispensation. To a large extent, rural areas have been neglected in development policies and, similarly, the rural dimension of basic education issues has been largely overlooked. Basic facts, presented and discussed in this mini – dissertation, highlight this oversight and indicate why it is necessary to attend to rural education as a matter of urgency.*

*The research results affirm that the education of Black people in rural areas was, in most instances, negatively affected by previous White government policies. Insufficient funding also had a negative impact on rural schools in particular, making infrastructural provision in rural areas extremely difficult.*

*The research findings of this study point to the singular conclusion that the great majority of children in poor rural communities are receiving less than is their right in a democratic South Africa. Worse still is the fact that this will have a long term effect on their opportunities for development, their capabilities and their lives. Moreover, the communities in which they live will continue to suffer the debilitating effects of poverty and inequality for as long as these problems remain.*

*There is hope for the future of neglected communities in the rural areas of the Limpopo Province only if the vision/dream to improve the quality of education in rural areas across South Africa were to be realized. The provision of well built and well maintained school buildings and other facilities, coupled with a comprehensive curriculum, is only the beginning of the realization of this dream.*

*Based on these research findings and the implications they have for rural education in the Limpopo province, several recommendations with regard to rural education are presented as a conclusion to this study.*

## KEYWORDS

*Communities*

*Comprehensive*

*Curriculum*

*Development*

*Education*

*Effective schools*

*Expectations*

*Experiences*

*Infrastructure provision*

*Perceptions*

*Quality Education*

*Rural*

*Support*

*Vision*

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## CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

If education provision in rural areas is to be different, fundamental changes will have to be effected to the way in which decisions on rural education are made and executed. However, transformation and redress of education in rural areas also depends on integrated planning and implementation, something that requires hard work and sacrifice from and the participation of local government, stakeholders and communities (Ministerial Committee Report: 2005: 5).

In terms of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the South African government is required to promote values in society in a manner that serves the general good and public interest. These values include social justice, equality, non – racism and non – sexism, human dignity, an open society, accountability, respect, the rule of law and reconciliation. If these values were to have real meaning for ordinary people in their everyday lives, they must be actively taught in functional educational institutions, not in institutions that have broken down (Asmal & James, 2002: xiii). This said, it is common knowledge that the challenges facing rural schooling are complex and intractable. Addressing the challenges would require the utilization of an integrated, multi-faceted strategy that would operate at macro and micro levels, that would link education interventions with interventions of other government departments, business, unions and civil society, and that would ensure on-going consultation with, and participation of, educators, learners, parents and communities (Ministerial Committee Report: 2005: 7).

The demography, geography, economy and culture of the rural areas of each province are different and shape the lives of rural people in fundamentally different ways. Improving the quality of rural schooling is, therefore, a complex project, with the primary responsibility for doing so resting squarely with government (Ministerial Committee Report: 2005: 11).

In 1996 the Limpopo provincial government, in its quest to address the education problems, launched, in conjunction with the Department of Education, a vigorous campaign aimed at establishing six comprehensive schools in the most underprivileged communities in the six districts under its jurisdiction. Informing the establishment of these schools, according to Dr. Motsoaledi, a member of the Executive Council for Education, in Limpopo is the mission to ensure that facilities in these schools would be equal to those in former Model “C” schools. The newly-established schools could then serve as centres for development in the various districts. Such schools would have the necessary physical facilities such as media science, science laboratory, computer laboratory, music room, art room, needlework and clothing centre, and a hall for recreation and meetings. A vegetable garden, an orchard and an attractive flower garden as well as modern play grounds for hockey, tennis, soccer, netball, cricket, swimming pool, etc

would also form part of the physical school environment. The inclusion of facilities that would facilitate the development of technical, academic as well as artistic abilities would also ensure that learners are trained in areas resembling those taught at international schools. It is clear, therefore, that the Department of Education had a long-term dream or vision of enhanced education standards in the rural communities.

Given the future scenario that we are faced with, especially at the dawning of a democratic society, it is imperative that we create an education system that will ensure the maximum development of human resources and potential in our society. Most crucial in this regard is the need to develop and create good quality education through the creation of quality schools in rural communities. Such schools would then be able to offer a curriculum aimed at redressing the past imbalances, imbalances that had serious repercussions for most black citizens who have been excluded from competing in the international arena because they lack the necessary skills. The introduction of comprehensive schools is, therefore, aimed at improving rural education, something that would hopefully minimize the exodus of learners to urban schools, which are perceived as offering education of a better quality because of their well-resourced, modern facilities.

Comprehensive education aims at raising the expectations and standards of all pupils. This means never being satisfied with anything less than the absolute best. Implied in this statement is the notion that comprehensive education should not just be about pupils per se, or about groups of pupils labeled by ability, class, gender, religion or race; rather, it should be about valuing each learner as well as about the expectations that the comprehensive school has of each learner. It follows that the comprehensive school of the future must develop whole school policies which will cater for the needs of each of its learners and that schools should be rooted in the social fabric of the communities in which they are situated. In order to be effective interventions aimed at improving the quality of rural schooling must be consistent with government's rural development strategy that expands access to economic activities, invests in infrastructure and human capital and prepares rural people for employment outside the field of primary agricultural production by building knowledge and skills capacity and making state institutions responsive to poor people. There are many challenges to comprehensive schools such as the lack of efficient management teams, competent educators, and lack of administration and support staff, and over crowdedness. This study focuses on one of these challenges, which is, lack of proper administration. In one area the comprehensive school is just for primary level, that is, grade r to grade seven. In another area there is a high school only. Meaning there is lack of continuity for learners in a particular area since they now have to enroll in another area.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Considering the establishment of the six comprehensive schools in the Limpopo province in the light of the abovementioned statements about the inequality of education the question is to what extent would the establishment of comprehensive schools as an innovative strategy address the problems identified in rural areas in the Limpopo Province.

The problem statement revolves around the following critical questions:

- What are the problems experienced by public schools in the rural areas of the Limpopo Province?
- What is the purpose of comprehensive schools in other countries of the world and in other provinces in South Africa?
- What is school effectiveness and which management competencies are necessary for principals to manage their schools effectively and efficiently?
- What are the perceptions, experiences and expectations of stakeholders in education regarding the success of selected comprehensive schools?

## 1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In view of the problem formulated above, the general aim of this research is to determine the extent to which comprehensive schools in the Limpopo province would address the problems identified in rural areas. To attain the general aim of this research, the following are pursued:

- To determine the problems experienced by public schools in the rural areas of the Limpopo Province?
- To establish the purpose of comprehensive schools in other countries of the world and in other provinces in South Africa?
- To ascertain what school effectiveness is and which management competencies are necessary for principals to manage their schools effectively and efficiently?
- To explore the perceptions, experiences and expectations of stakeholders in education regarding the success of selected comprehensive schools?

## 1.4 EXPLANATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

### 1.4.1 The term “rural”

In this study “rural” tend to emphasize a particular feature of rurality; settlement or demographic patterns, spatial or environment characteristics, political or economic factors, and socio – cultural or historical factors (Ministerial Committee Report, 2005: 8). In South Africa, colonialism and apartheid left an indelible print on all aspects of rural life through land dispossessions, resettlement policies, and systematic exclusion from

opportunities to improve personal and social well being, making poverty the most endemic characteristic of rural areas.

The term, “rural”, in this instance refers to areas which are not in the city. These are areas that are isolated, poor or traditionally administered areas (Smith 1984: 11 – 12). These areas tend to be characterized by poverty and geographic isolation. Facilities and essential services are usually non-existent or poor; population density is low, and there is a limited range of employment possibilities (Hartshone 1985: 150).

## **1.4.2 Education**

According to Venter (1979: 32), education is a universal phenomenon that is limited to the human being and it must be accepted as an original reality. Education should be perceived as a continuous process and, according to Lengrand (1970: 44 – 45), must accept the following responsibilities:

- First, the setting in place of structures and methods that will assist a human being to maintain the continuity of his apprenticeship and training throughout his life span.
- Second, to equip each individual to become in the highest and truest degree both the object and the instrument of his own development through the many forms of self education (Seroto 2000: 8).

Lengrand’s definition characterizes education as a life long and continuous process, from the earliest years of life, to the final phase (Lengrand 1986: 11).. In this study, education is a lifelong process aimed at equipping children with cultural diversity, but also at providing each one with the attitudes and capacities that will enable him/ her to cope successfully with the challenges s/he will have to face in the world beyond that of studying. This definition of Lengrand forms the basis for the understanding of education in this research project.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative research design examines one phenomenon of interest in depth at the selected site or sites for the sake of a better understanding of that phenomenon, regardless of the number of participants, social scenes, processes and activities (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:396). The phenomenon of interest in this study is to determine the perceptions, experiences and expectations of educators about the success of comprehensive schools in rural areas in the Limpopo Province.

For the purpose of this study the researcher used the qualitative approach. According to Bauer and Gaskell (2000: 12) the qualitative approach represents the fundamental epistemological framework for conceptualizing the nature of knowing, social reality and procedures for undertaking the phenomena. According to De Vos (1998: 71) qualitative research gives the researcher a firsthand, holistic understanding

of the phenomena of interest by providing him/her with a flexible strategy for problem formation and data collection.

Tutty et al (1996: 4) describes qualitative research as the study of people in their natural environments as they go about daily lives. In this field of study, the qualitative research approach is employed with a view to understanding the social phenomenon from the participant's perspective. Understanding is acquired by analyzing the many contexts of the participants and by narrating participants' meanings for these situations and events. Participants' meanings include their feelings, beliefs, ideals, thoughts and actions (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997: 392).

According to Berg (2000: 275), the central purpose of methodological section is to explain to readers what the data consist of, and how data were collected, organized and analyzed. However, according to Howes (2000: 31), methodology is chosen to fit with the epistemological demands of the researcher and the researcher's community. He argues that methodology of any type provides a framework for hearing, seeing and feeling human experience, and has implications for the knowledge that the researcher creates about the social world. In this study, a qualitative approach was used because qualitative techniques allow the researcher to share in the understanding and the perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to the phenomena they study (De Vos, 1998: 71). According to Cohen and Manion, (1996: 8) the inclusion of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world is crucial to a real understanding of that world, hence the principal concern in this study was to understand the way in which the individual participants created, modified and interpreted their own world.

Because a qualitative approach allows the researcher to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their workplace phenomena, thus the qualitative techniques were used to determine the perceptions, experiences and expectations of the stakeholders in education regarding the success of the selected comprehensive schools in rural areas.

### **1.5.1 Literature review**

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995: 22) defines literature review as "a process of reading some background information that has been published and appears to be relevant to the research topic". In the study of literature, relevant data pertaining to the study problem are obtained from primary and secondary sources alike, critically examined and evaluated, and objectively recorded. Ary, Jacobs and Rezavich (1990: 68) identified several important functions of a literature review, some of which are listed below:

- Knowledge of related literature enables investigators to define the frontiers of their fields.
- A thorough review of related theory and research enables researchers to put their questions in perspective.

- Reviewing related literature helps researchers to limit their questions and to clarify and define the concepts of the study.
- A critical review of literature often lends to insight into reasons for contradictory results in an area.
- Through studying related research, investigators learn which methodologies have proven useful and which seem less promising.
- A thorough search through related research avoids unintentional replication of previous studies.
- The study of related literature places researchers in a better position to interpret the significance of their own results.

In this research project a literature study was undertaken to gather information that would enable the researcher to do a conceptual analysis of comprehensive rural schooling; to examine the effects of comprehensive school curriculum delivery on learner performance, and to evaluate learning programmes being implemented at comprehensive schools in the Limpopo province in terms of delivery. The literature includes old and newly published sources. The old sources still have information relevant to the topic under study.

Qualitative research methods are distinctive in that they are directed at the collection of data that provides the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the social world of research participants, teaching him/her about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003: 3). The researcher in this study used one of these typically qualitative data collection instruments, namely open-ended interviews, to collect data from School Management Teams, School governing Bodies (Parent component) and Learner Representative Council members at the selected comprehensive schools, using these in-depth interviews to collect participants' perceptions, views and expectations of how successful their schools are.

## **1.6 SAMPLING**

Purposive sampling is a procedure in which researchers select a subject based on predetermined criteria related to the extent to which the selected could contribute to the research study. Two schools were deliberately selected from the North–East and South-West of the Limpopo province. The participants in these schools were purposefully selected to get in-depth information' about their their perceptions, their views on, their experiences with and their expectations of a successful comprehensive rural schools. Participants for group interviews in this study were selected on the basis of homogeneity and the extent to which participants were likely to contribute to a successful focus group interview (Shumm, et al, 1996: 58). In this study, the participants in the primary school were, the principal, two School Management Team (SMT) members, two parent component School Governing Body (SGB) members, while in the secondary



school the participants were, the principal, one SMT member, two parent component SGB and three Learner representative Council (LRC) members.

## **1.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

### **1.7.1 Interviews**

Interview is when a researcher talks to someone with the purpose of obtaining information (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989:153). An interview is according to Nieuwenhuis (2006:22) a two way conversation where the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, and behaviour of the participants. The aim of the qualitative interviews is to “see the world through the eyes of the participants” and the interview can be a valuable source of information, provided it is used correctly. The aim is always to obtain rich descriptive data that will help one understand the respondent’s construction of knowledge and social reality. If the interviewee thinks the topic is important and trusts the interviewer, the person is normally willing to share information with the researcher that he will not be able to collect in another way.

To ensure that the respondents talk to researcher in some depth about their perceptions and experience the investigator will use semi-structured interview and some questions relating to their perceptions, experiences and expectations about the success of their own comprehensive schools will be jotted down in advance (Kelly & Terre Blanche, 1999:128). Semi-structured interview is commonly used in research projects to corroborate data emerging from other data sources. It seldom spans a long time period and usually requires that the respondent answers a set of pre-determined questions. It does allow for the probing of and clarification of answers.

#### **1.7.1.1 Individual interviews**

The first step will be to conduct individual interviews with the principals of the selected schools. Interviews were conducted using open-ended questions posed to each principal with the aim to determine their perceptions, experiences of the success of their comprehensive school and their future expectations of their schools. The value of applying a semi-structured individual interview with a schedule is that the interview is flexible and adaptable allowing the interviewer to make a true assessment of what the participant believes in. Although flexible, data are obtained relatively systematically which makes it easy to compare and analyse data in order to interpret clearly (De Vos, 1998:299). The value of this interview structure is to provide a systematic collection of data (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:444; Borg & Gall 1996:306).

#### **1.7.1.2 Group interviews**

In a group interview a group of respondents are asked a set of semi- structured questions without debating or arguing about the responses being generated. Group interviews are based on the assumption that group interaction is productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience, and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information. Many

researchers argue that group interviews produce data rich in detail that are difficult to achieve with other research methods, but it may happen that some participants experience groups as threatening and the researcher should be attuned to this possibility by observing the group process carefully (Nieuwenhuis, 2006:26). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002:287), group interviewing is a useful way of conducting interviews. The advantages include the potential for discussion to develop, thus yielding a wide range of responses. There are practical and organizational advantages, too. They are often quicker than individual interviews and hence are timesaving and minimally disruptive. They bring together people with varied opinions. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:100) add that group interviews might be useful for gaining an insight into what might be pursued in subsequent individual interviews. The group interview process has the potential to reveal socially constructed meaning and underlying attitudes of these groups (Kleiber, 2004: 89). Its purpose is for the researcher to listen and gather information on how people feel or think about an issue, product, or service (Casey & Kruger, 2000: 4) with the emphasis being on understanding participants' experiences, interests, attitudes, perspectives and assumptions (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003: 90). Group interviews were conducted with SMT members, parent representatives on the Governing Body and learners of the Learner Representative Council of the secondary school.

### **1.7.1.3 Observations**

Cohen, et al maintains that observational data are attractive as they afford the researchers the opportunity to gather "live" data from "live" situations. In this study observations were done one day per school. This gave the researcher the opportunity to look at what was occurring in situ rather than at second hand (Patton, 1990:203-205). This enables the researcher to understand the context of programmes, to be open-minded, to work inductively and to see things that might otherwise have been unconsciously missed. Things that participants could not freely talk about in interview situations were also picked up enabling the researcher to move beyond perception-based data (e.g. opinions in interviews), and to access the personal knowledge (Cohen et, 2002: 305).

According to Morrison (1993:80) observation enable the researcher to gather data on:

- The physical setting, e.g. the physical environment and organization.
- The human setting, e.g. the organization of people, the characteristics and make-up of the groups or individuals being observed, for instance gender class.
- The interaction, e.g. the interactions that are taking place (formal, informal, planned, unplanned, verbal, non-verbal etc.)
- The programme setting, e.g. the resources and their organization, pedagogic styles, curricula and their organization

The researcher observed the following aspects:

- The general discipline at school.
- The utilization of facilities (music room, computer room, science laboratory etc)
- The maintenance of the building and school grounds.
- The school climate and culture
- Statistics available regarding the availability of trained staff, the staff learner ratio of school.
- Exceptional learner achievements etc.
- Why this specific school was a comprehensive school, looking at facilities available and subjects offered by the school.

## **1.8 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN**

### **1.8.1 Interview analysis**

Data were collected from participants at a comprehensive school to the North East of the province and one to the North West of the province. Data analysis provides the researcher with insight into and contextual knowledge of the situation, thereby enabling him/her to establish a variety of important links between the research questions, aims and data gathered (Litoselliti, 2003: 85).

The researcher personally analysed the data because it provided the researcher with an advantage of having insight and in-context knowledge about the research and enable him to establish a variety of important links between the research questions, aims and data gathered (Litoselliti, 2003: 85).

After each individual and group interview at a selected school the researcher immediately analysed the data before the next interview. This was be followed by transcription, where after the researcher systematically went through the data, typically line by line, and write a descriptive code by the side of each of the data (Cohen, *et al*, 2000: 283).

Secondly the researcher made an analysis of each of a series of individual and group interviews to help determine the number and focus of subsequent meetings and to revise the topic guide lines or moderate the techniques in the light of the gathered information (Litoselliti, 2003: 87).

The researcher identified those substantive parts in the transcript that relate to the research questions as well as new topics or issue and classify or code them (Litoselliti, 2003: 90). He modified the wording of category headings, shift the content of the categories, add new categories and evaluate the interpretations many times during the process.

All participants' comments were examined, looking for the most important themes, issues and ideas. Trends and patterns in the content of each discussion and similarities and differences across a number of different groups on the topic will be analyzed (Litoselliti, 2003: 91).

The data will be examined in depth, paying attention to the tapes, including those of the follow up interviews, documents, and observation feedback and field notes.

The in-depth analysis of the interviews and group data will provide answers to the following questions

- Were the objectives achieved?
- What was confirmed and what was challenged by the findings?
- What new ideas emerged? (Litoselliti, 2003: 94).

### **1.8.2 Observation analysis**

After the collection of data from classroom observation analysis took place. The researcher observed the following aspects:

- The general discipline at school.
- The utilization of facilities (music room, computer room, science laboratory etc)
- The maintenance of the building and school grounds.
- The school climate and culture
- Statistics available regarding the availability of trained staff, the staff learner ratio of school.
- Exceptional learner achievements etc.
- Why this specific school was a comprehensive school, looking at facilities available and subjects offered by the school.

## **1.9 ETHICAL ASPECTS OF RESEARCH**

Cavan, as cited by Cohen and Manion (1994: 359), explains ethics as “a matter of principal sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect for human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature. According to De Vos (1998: 240) ethics is a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, are subsequently widely accepted and offer rules and behavioral expectations about the most current conduct towards experimental subjects, and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students. Ethical guidelines set the standards and provide the basis upon which the researcher ought to evaluate his/ her own conduct. Ethical principles were followed according to the University guidelines and an ethical clearance was issued by the University of Pretoria as attached in the annexure.

The researcher in this study was guided by following ethical guidelines.

### **1.9.1 Voluntary participation**

According to Trochim (2001: 24) the principles of voluntary participation requires that people are not forced to participate in research. All participants consented to full participation. There was no pressure or manipulation. Closely related to voluntary participation is the aspect of informed consent.

### **1.9.2 Informed consent**

Diener and Crandal in Cohen and Manion (1994: 350) define informed consent as “procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decision”. This definition involves four elements; competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension. Informed consent is the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit or similar unfair inducement or manipulation (Farnham and Pilmott, 1995: 47).

According to Trochim (2001: 24) informed consent means that prospective research participants are fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in research and must give their consent to participate. This informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of investigation and the credibility of the research be rendered to potential subjects. Informed consent is necessary even if the subjects do not listen to explanations or are not interested in knowing (De Vos, 1998: 26).

### **1.9.3 Betrayal**

Cohen and Manion (1994: 368) say, the term “betrayal” is usually applied to those occasions where data disclosed in confidence are revealed publicly in such a way as to cause embarrassment, anxiety, or perhaps suffering to the subject or participant disclosing the information. It is a breach of trust, in contrast to confidentiality, and is often a consequence of selfish motives of either a personal or professional nature. In this research participants will not be betrayed in any way.

### **1.9.4 Deception**

De Vos (1998: 27) states that this is a deliberate misrepresentation of facts in order to make another person believe what is not true. It refers to withholding of information or offering incorrect information in order to ensure participation of subjects when they would otherwise possibly have refused it. The researcher should not deceive the respondents and if it happens inadvertently, it must be rectified immediately.

### **1.9.5 Confidentiality and anonymity**

According to Trochim (2001: 24) confidentiality and anonymity are the two standards that help to protect the privacy of research participants. Farnham and Pilmott (1995: 48) define confidentiality as an active attempt to remove from research records any elements that might indicate the subject’s identities while anonymity means subjects remain nameless. Trochim (2001: 24) further indicates that participant confidentiality

assures the participants that identifying information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the society.

The researcher protected the anonymity of the participants and kept research data confidential (Nachmias and Nachmias in Cohen and Manion (1994: 366). The participants and their school's names were kept confidential. Anonymity is a stricter standard that means that the participants will remain anonymous throughout the study, even to the researchers themselves

### **1.9.6 Right to privacy**

Cohen and Manion (1994: 365) states that right to privacy “extends to all information relating to a person’s physical and mental condition, personal circumstances and social relationships which is not already in the public domain. It gives the individual or collective the freedom to decide for themselves when and where, in what circumstances and to what extent their personal attitudes, opinions, habits, eccentricities, doubts and fears are to be communicated to or withheld from others”. In this study information is going to be highly guarded and the objects’ right of privacy is going to be respected.

Farnham and Pilmlott (1995: 48) emphasizes the importance of taking intentional precautions to ensure that information does not accidentally fall into the wrong hands or become public. In this study, precautions were taken to ensure that research-related information was not carelessly discussed. In this study the researcher abided by the ethical code to ensure that nothing was left to chance.

## **10 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

### **1.10.1 Validity of qualitative design**

Validity refers to the degree to which the explanations of the phenomena match the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:407). In qualitative research, claims of validity rest on the data collection and analyses techniques and on the extent to which these techniques are clearly explained. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:407-408, qualitative researchers commonly use a combination of any of the following ten strategies to enhance design validity: Prolonged field work, multi-method strategies, participant verbatim language, low-inference descriptors, multiple researchers, mechanically recorded data, participant researcher, member checking, participant review, and negative cases or discrepant data.

To ensure validity of this study, a combination of four strategies were used, namely participants’ verbatim accounts were collected through the individual and group interviews and these verbatim accounts will be mechanically recorded (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:408). The other strategy that was used is observations.

### **1.10.2 Reliability of qualitative design**

Reliability of qualitative research design refers to the extent to which other researchers would arrive at similar results if they studied the same case using exactly the same procedures (Borg & Gall, 1996:572). According to Krathwohl (1998:435), reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument in measuring whatever it measures. In a qualitative research paradigm, however, reliability is interpreted as trustworthiness and the degree of transferability of findings (De Vos, 1998:348).

After the researcher conducted the interviews, he took the research report back to the respondents and recorded their reactions to his report (Boor in Cohen, et al, 2001: 120).

### **1.11 LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH**

This research is limited to two comprehensive schools in the Limpopo Province, focusing primarily on perceptions and expectations that stakeholders have regarding the impact of comprehensive education on problems identified in rural areas in the Limpopo Province. An important limitation is that individual in-depth interviews were used to collect data, but not everyone was involved. A limited number of people were involved in the research hence the feelings of the entire population of partners involved at comprehensive schools in the Limpopo Province may not be sufficiently reflected.

The disadvantage of the fact that the group was composed of individuals who already knew each other was they might have felt reluctant to speak frankly to one another. Since one of the purpose of this research study was to gain insight into a “mentoring” programme and perceptions of both the teacher and their heads of departments, individual interviews provided a relatively natural, relaxed and secure setting in which participants were encouraged to share both positive and negative comments (Birmingham and Wilkinson, 2003: 109).

Irrespective of these outlined limitations, the main problem of the study was researched, answers were found and objectives were realized. The limitations thus did negatively influence the research as a whole, only the applicability of its findings to the general population.

For further research it would be interesting to repeat the study with a larger sample, still using a qualitative approach to be able to generalize the results.

### **1.12 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will add to the existing literature on the perceptions, experiences and expectations of school communities about the success of comprehensive schools in rural areas. The perceptions of SGBs, SMTs and LRCs about comprehensive schools, may also broaden the conscious choices that can be made by



government with respect to the establishment of comprehensive schools in rural areas. With the new ideas, government is offered a better to revise the establishment of comprehensive schools.

It was against the background of the general problems in the Limpopo province, that the provincial government, in its quest to address education problems, took the initiative of establishing six well resourced comprehensive schools, with various sporting facilities, that would also serve as resource centres. As mentioned earlier, the introduction of these comprehensive schools was primarily aimed at ensuring that all learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, have access to high quality education, thereby enhancing and improving the education of rural communities as well as minimizing the exodus of learners commuting to urban schools in search for better quality education at former “Model C” schools. The former “Model C” schools are well established with enough resources and modern sporting facilities. Teaching and learning take place in a pleasant atmosphere, with each and every classroom having a manageable number of learners.

The in-depth examination of comprehensive schools in the Limpopo provinces of South Africa would provide the researcher with a better understanding of the operational requirements of such institutions as compared to other public schools. Furthermore, the review would give some indication of the quality of teaching personnel to be recruited to these institutions.

One of rural comprehensive school's objectives is to identify the characteristics of successful and effective schools so as to determine the management competencies that principals would need to manage their schools successfully, effectively and efficiently. Sergiovanni (1991: 76), distinguishing between effective and successful schools, claims that effectiveness has both common and technical meanings. Commonly it is understood as the ability to produce a desired effect. Thus, in a sense any school that produces effects desired by a particular group would be considered effective by that group. Technically speaking though, especially within educational circles, school effectiveness has taken on a specific and specialized meaning, with an effective school coming to be understood as a school whose learners achieve well in basic skills as measured by achievement tests and examinations.

Sergiovanni further states that the dimensions of management, teaching and leadership that are included in the school effectiveness model have convincingly been linked to the limited view of effectiveness but not to broader, higher order and more qualitative intellectual and academic views of effectiveness. The image of a successful school is more comprehensive and expansive and seems more consistent with the high quality schooling that most people, rich and poor, urban and rural, new and old, want for their children (Goodlad: 1993). According to Sergiovanni, (1991: 79 – 80); Mortimore et al, (1988); Lipsitz, (1984); Purkey & Smith, (1983), the following characteristics are typical of successful schools yet the original question of why some



schools seem to get good academic and educational results from at risk or marginalized areas in Limpopo province has not been answered.

The results of research on so-called “successful” schools indicated that they had at least the following five characteristics in common:

- Strong leadership by the principal
- Appropriate responsiveness to the developmental levels of learners with emphasis being placed on the mastery of basic skills and other intellectual objectives.
- A clean orderly school environment
- High educator expectations of learner performance
- Frequent assessment of learner progress

It was quite a surprise that the availability of resource materials made no significant difference to the comprehensive rural school, bearing in mind that the emphasis was placed on transformation of the entire school, rather than on a specific aspect of instructional strategy or curriculum. Another very important focus of this research is the management and leadership competency of individual school leaders in general but of the school principal in particular given research indications that strong leadership is one of the most important characteristics of successful comprehensive rural schools. For principals to be effective managers of their schools they need management competencies. According to Mestry and Grobler (2004: 6 – 7), most schools in South Africa are experiencing an array of problem issues, criticisms and expectations are currently making it more difficult for principals to lead and make an impact than ever before.

A basic principle of comprehensive rural school education is that it recognizes the learners’ unconditional entitlement to a state-funded education, regardless of race, gender and social background. Equally, learners’ abilities, attitudes, motivations and personalities are not formal barriers against which that entitlement becomes a conditional. Learners do not have to fulfill any list of desirable characteristics in order to receive this entitlement. It is theirs by right no matter who they are, no matter what their strengths and weaknesses, and no matter what their levels of motivation. All children in comprehensive rural schools are considered to be equal and it is up to the educators in comprehensive schools to this challenge more seriously. Nevertheless, the educator is required to accept her/his comprehensive responsibilities and to try and respond positively to this challenge.

One of the most fundamental ways in which the comprehensive principle becomes classroom reality is in educator-learner relationships. Just as the principle of comprehensive education activity approves of the entitlement to education of all learners, so educators are required to approve of their own particular learners.

Because the education of all learners is recognized as being of equal value, every learner can expect his/her own particular needs, strengths and weaknesses to be recognised and addressed. Also, each learner is entitled to have learning outcomes devised for him/her that will enable said learner to enjoy success and make progress (Tubbs: 1996: 68). Educators are expected to have general rather than predetermined or selective expectations of learners they will be asked to teach. Their professional obligation in comprehensive education is to value each learner equally and the manifestation of this obligation needs to be visible in all aspects of practice, both in the classroom and outside.

The findings of this research could be useful to the Limpopo Education Department, assisting in the development of learning facilities at all rural comprehensive schools from foundation phase to senior phase, thus ensuring continuity in the same area. This means that the department of education should consider establishing both primary and secondary comprehensive rural schools in the same area to ensure continuity. Curriculum development specialists who develop course materials and refresher courses on curriculum delivery programmes could also benefit from this research. Moreover, the research results could be used as basis for bringing about improvements in the development of physical facilities, sitting accommodation in classroom and a reduction in the learner-teacher ratio.

### **1.13 RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

- CHAPTER ONE:** Covers the introduction, orientation, statement of purpose, aims and objectives, the purpose of the study methods and a research plan.
- CHAPTER TWO:** Examines by means of literature study problems experienced by public schools in the rural areas and the purpose of comprehensive schools in other provinces of South Africa and other countries of the world.
- CHAPTER THREE:** Deals with the characteristics of successful comprehensive rural schools and determines the management competencies which are necessary for school communities and principals to manage rural comprehensive schools effectively and efficiently.
- CHAPTER FOUR:** Consists of an analysis of research findings on the perceptions, experiences and expectations of stakeholders in education regarding the selected comprehensive schools. Summaries of the interviews and findings are briefly discussed.
- CHAPTER FIVE:** Consists of the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN THE RURAL AREAS OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter focus was on the introduction of comprehensive schools which were primarily aimed at ensuring that all learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, have access to high quality education. This was to enhance and improve the education of rural communities as well as to minimize the problems of the exodus of learners from commuting to urban schools in search of better quality education at former “Model C” schools. Because South Africa has a history of past inequalities and discrimination there was a need for reform in education. The education system has changed to address the history of neglect, inequality and discrimination in education, though still prevalent. The inequalities and the neglect are experienced and reflected mostly in the rural areas of South Africa (Sunday Times 1998: 22). The fact is that education changes will not necessarily eliminate all the hard realities and circumstances of rural comprehensive schools and the inadequacies of education in these areas. South African is currently undergoing educational transformation in rural comprehensive schools. According to Hartshorne (1992: 111)

*Most people in the rural areas are where they are and what they are because of state policies in which they had little or no say; and because of fundamental economic and political structures that govern their lives, their opportunities for employment, the social conditions and which they live, their lack of political power to change things, and the kind of education which is available to them. Rural chiefs and their communities now have a say through the parent component of the school governing bodies (South African Schools Act: 1996).*

Graaff and Gordon (1992: 208) support this view and point out that, of all the Black children in South Africa who have been subjected to the famous Bantu Education system, rural children are the most disadvantaged and the most ignored. The manifestation of apartheid policy resulted in Black people being demarcated to live as separate entities.

According to Jansen (2001), the most difficult task in a post-apartheid education system is not to create non-racial schools, but to see that Black rural pupils get a much better deal than they did in the past. One of the challenges facing the South African Government since the 1994 elections is to redress the educational inequalities among those sectors of people who have suffered particular disadvantages for numerous decades. Schools situated in the rural areas are characterized by a severe lack of physical facilities and

other resources. Classroom shortages are more critical in rural primary and secondary schools, with almost all the learners in these schools experiencing a learner – classroom ratio as high as 80: 1 (Scott 1995: 41).

It is commonly accepted that rural areas being poor there is little in the way of reading material, which can assist in the advancement of literacy, at homes. The Limpopo Province has the country's lowest literacy rate of 65 percent (Klein 1996: 2). Given the observation by Suttner and Chronin (1986: 183) that illiteracy may create an impediment of democracy and inhibit people's participation in controlling their own lives, the prevalence of this phenomenon is indeed problematic with regard to effective nation building.

Black teacher qualifications in the province are depressing because according to Scott (1995: 23), 79 percent of under qualified and 11 percent of unqualified teachers are found in the rural areas of this province. The problem with rural education seems to be that most qualified teachers are streaming to urban areas because these areas are better resourced than rural areas. According to the National Education Policy Investigation Report (NEPI) (1993: 70), the upgrading of unqualified and under-qualified teachers, especially in rural areas, is regarded as a priority.

Another problem experienced in rural areas is the disposition of parents towards the education of their children. According to Hartshorne (1992: 119), parental perceptions towards education are two-fold and conflicting. On the one hand, education is perceived as failing to contribute to the satisfaction of the local economic and other needs of the community; on the other hand, it has failed to provide access to higher knowledge and more status that would enable young people to move out of the rural situations and into a world of greater opportunities. In many instances, parents were also previously not directly involved in the education of their children. The management councils that were established by the former Department of Education and Training (DET) and the former Homeland departments of Education could not attract the attention and interest of parents and hence, parents did not realize the importance of being involved in the education of their children. Ironically and tragically, many of these parents who did serve on the school councils could themselves neither read nor write.

The above scenario indicates a great deterioration in performance at all levels of the education system in the rural areas of the Limpopo Province. Evidently, there is a serious need for the intervention of education in the rural areas, especially in the Limpopo Province and also an imperative to help solve this serious situation in rural education. The essential problems and issues in rural comprehensive schools are no different from those in the rest of South Africa, except that they are generally more extreme, more intractable because of greater poverty, isolation and feelings of dependency and powerlessness, exacerbated by additional layers of bureaucracy and traditional authoritarianism Hartshorne (1989: 19). There are differences of degrees, of detail, of approach and method, but the fundamentals are the same. It

is not a matter of first solving the problems of education in the urban areas, and then attempting to bring the rural areas into line. Arnold et al (2005: 20 (b) contend that rural schools have a unique set of challenges, largely due to their geographic isolation.

In the rural communities, as in the urban areas, there must be a concern for the development of people so that they become involved and participate in the decisions that are taken about education. They will then be able to support an education in which they can believe and through which they can ensure practical relevance and advantage for their children. A change in government, by itself, will not change the hard realities of rural life or the inadequacies of education in rural areas. Fundamental educational change will take place only when people become part of the democratic process, participate in its development, and see themselves, not as part a neglected periphery (Hartshorne, 1989: 19) but as equal partners in the struggle for a new quality of life in the rural communities of the Limpopo Province. This recognition of their “equality in the struggle” could help bring new meaning to the lives of people in the rural areas. Nelson Mandela, former president of the country sums it up best (Nepad Policy Focus: 2004: [iii]) when he says:

*Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine and that the child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation.*

Education is the driving force behind any strong economy and a prerequisite for social and economic growth. It creates opportunities and provides societies with a more highly educated and skilled workforce, necessary for stimulating development. Hartshorne contends that what is needed is not a narrow “ skills and training” approach to education, but an education that will enable all young people to cope with the problems of life and living as individuals in the difficult and changing society that is South Africa today (Hartshorne (1989: 21). It has to do with the imperative that education should concern itself with the nurturing of ethical, moral and spiritual values, without which life in present-day society is proving to be self-centered, exploitative and destructive. In other words, education should concern itself with teaching the young to understand and be sensible to the economic and political issues in our society, so that they can develop a base from which to function as citizens in an open and democratic society; to earn a living, not just within the pre-ordained limits of a particular set of skills connected to a particular class or environment but through the development of the ability to think creatively and critically, the ability to solve problems by working together and sharing with others, thereby preparing themselves for a world in which versatility and the ability to adapt will prove to be of paramount importance (Hartshorne; 1989: 20).

## 2.2 THE PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EDUCATION IN THE RURAL COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

A caregiver who was interviewed in the rural area of Sekhukhuneland outlined the main purpose of education for Limpopo's rural areas in terms of its importance for employment, marriage and citizenship, saying, "As a parent I encourage my child to go to school because I want him to be educated and to be able to find a decent job so that he could build himself a house because it is difficult for those who are not educated to get a job. Even marriage today is for those who are educated" (Emerging Voices; 2005: 38).

Despite this strong support and commitment to education, the daily lives of children are such that they seem to be following in the footsteps of their parents. The purpose of education differs for boys and girls. For girls there is a strong relationship to marriage and childcare. The relationship of education to marriage features as part of the explanation of why the chores expected of girls at home and in school are domestic, while those for boys are agricultural. Early pregnancy and marriage can be seen as a way of securing the girl's future. Education can be ambiguous as it can be seen as either improving the chances of marriage or damaging them. For many parents, traditional and modern forms of education play complementary roles. There is a sense among adults and elders that school is not as important as the community in preparing young people for the stage of life (Emerging Voices; 2005: 39).

In many places, parents encourage education around issues of sexuality and the transition to adulthood through initiation schools, for example, through "Koma or Lebollo" for boys. Most parents in Limpopo rural areas believe that sex education and advice on contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, should form a crucial part of the school curriculum. Parents tend to feel that the school should reinforce values such as respect, discipline, responsibility and appropriate sexual behaviour. Respect for traditional norms, values and expectations are key. At home and in the community children are taught to respect others, especially adults, irrespective of whether they are their parents or not (Emerging Voices; 2005: 39 – 40).

Poverty affects the ability of families and children to engage with education. The rural poor are mainly women living in households facing food insecurity on a daily basis. They live in those areas of the country with the highest levels of poverty and unemployment and rely on meagre sources of income derived from pensions and social grants. Household decisions to send children to school are strongly influenced by economic, social and cultural contexts. There is a deep underlying support amongst parents and communities for the schooling of children, but this support is constantly undermined by the conditions of life imposed by poverty and unemployment. The advent of democracy has opened up the possibility of a better life for all through rural development. In the short term, formal democracy has not resulted in development in those areas whose histories have been to serve as labour reservoirs for the mines and factories of the

urban centers (HSRC Report on Education; 2005: 41). What indeed do democracy and development mean in the areas, and what contribution can education and schooling make to both?

Past discrimination resulting in a lack of education is generally seen as contributing to unemployment, inequality in employment and wages, and poverty. People are so disadvantaged that they are unable to secure income capable of ensuring education for either themselves or their children (DoE, 2000:27). Therefore, to improve the quality of rural education is a complex undertaking, and the primary responsibility for this daunting task rests with government. The Ministerial committee Report on rural education points out the importance of giving substance to South Africa's constitutional commitment to balance the right to education with a recognition of the importance of the needs of particular people in specific contexts with their reservoirs of indigenous knowledge, capabilities and character. This orientation, and its underlying theoretical framework, is expressed in the following principles;

- (i) *Section 29 of the Constitution declares: "Everyone has a right to basic education", and the preamble to the South African Schools Act States; "This country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in education provision" Constitutional entitlements therefore have to be met by provision of quality basic education for all sections of society.*
- (ii) *Treating unequal as equals can perpetuate inequality. Rural education and farm schools in particular merit differentiation of treatment as special cases for the provision and monitoring of quality education.*
- (iii) *Although education serves individual aspirations such as for social mobility, states education necessarily privileges social benefits. Current conditions imply that the most important aims for rural education are rural development and poverty alleviation.*
- (iv) *Even though rural schooling is seriously under-resourced, strategies should avoid depicting rurality in purely deficit terms. Rural communities have their own unique assets on which quality schooling and development can be built. (Ministerial Report, 2005:5).*

How to reconcile the different expectations of the home and schools creates a tension for learners within families and between schools and communities. One of the commonest reasons for children not attending school or for the disruption of their schooling is that their families need them to work. Every child has extensive domestic duties. Boys' work is mainly agricultural, in the fields and with animals. Girls' work is mainly around the house. Yet, depending on family circumstances, girls can also be expected to do boys' work and boys to do girls' work. At times household chores create tensions between school schedules,



family responsibilities, social roles and the desire for education. Schools require learners to be there on time, ready for school, and that is what most parents and learners also want. However, agricultural and domestic chores are necessary for survival and are part of the daily routine of rural life, something that parents have done in their time, and expect of their own children (Emerging Voices; 2005: 46).

Not only do parents need their children's labour, they also believe that household chores are part of learning about and preparing for life, complementing formal education. Punishment at school for late-coming is not uncommon and as a result many children simply stay away from school on those days when their chores make them very late (Emerging Voices; 2005: 49).

### **2.3 THE DISTANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME**

The walk to school is the bridge between home and formal education. In the mornings, children wend their way to school across hills, mountains and through valleys, fields and dongas, rivers and streams, over potholed or muddy rural roads past bushes and forests on foot. Almost all children walk to school. Some children have to travel long distances, in many instances having to go across rivers that are in flood. In the Mafefe village, in Sekhukhuneland, for example, children have to cross flooded rivers through a "Segwaigwai"— a makeshift bridge made of timber which, of course, means that when the river is in flood crossing it becomes impossible and neither children nor principal and teachers who live far from school can come to school. In many cases it is both an expensive and threatening experience to go to school. The long distances to school increase the chances of road accidents and the threat from criminals, who in some areas have been known to rob or rape learners going to school. Compounding the distance is the cost of transport. The unemployment rate in rural areas makes it difficult for parents to pay for children's transport (Emerging Voices; 2005: 47 – 48).

Learners and parents are concerned about the long distances that children must walk to school. They need schools to be closer, and are especially concerned about the lack of high schools and the distance between them and their homes. Young people perceive the distance from school as one of the reasons some children dropout of school. Poor roads also make other services such as ambulances, clinics, police and taxis difficult to access.

### **2.4 THE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL SCHOOLS**

The lack of basic services affects every aspect of community life. Schools are in no better shape. The lack of basic services in the community affects schools and impacts on access to schooling as well as on the quality of education for all. Successful improvement internationally has shown that a school needs to be assisted, both in maintaining the work it does on a day-to-day basis, with the idea of continuing to achieve its objectives, and in moving to a higher level of development for all its constituents and its community



(Tager, 2003: 71). The poor standard of education currently available to children in rural schools, where the lack of classrooms results in many children being taught under trees, and where a lack of text books, stationery and educational aids, exacerbated by the prevalence of inadequately qualified educators, perpetuates the poverty cycle results in children not being provided with skills they can use competitively in the labour market (Tager, 2003: 93).

Redressing the damage of the Bantu Education system and closing the gap between rural and urban is a daunting task. It is important to note that the links between economic policy and the delivery of educational programmes to suit those policies are undeniable (Tager, 2003: 93). In addressing the educational needs of the multitude of rural school children who are still victims of the inequalities brought about by apartheid's educational policies, one must therefore take cognizance of the links between economics and education when proposing solutions.

When schools do not have electricity, they cannot offer adult education classes in the evenings. Many buildings are in serious need of repair, with doors and windows, flooring and toilet facilities being high on the list of repairs needed. Generally speaking facilities linked to basic services are poor. The quality of toilet facilities differs enormously, with some schools having virtually no toilets, while others had completely dilapidated and unusable structures. This constitutes a major hygienic problem, since children tend to relieve themselves anywhere (Emerging Voices; 2005: 71).

The problem is not simply one of providing classrooms, nor is it even one of providing books or additional educators. And even if these were solutions, they are a long way from being implemented in a way that adequately addresses or alleviates the problem. Essentially, the problem that needs to be addressed is that of rural poverty, and the solutions to this problem are multi-faceted and require an integrated, holistic approach (Tager, 2003: 93).

## **2.5 CURRICULUM**

Girls and boys in the rural areas should be given equal opportunities to succeed and advance while at schools. In this process the curriculum is crucial, in the sense that it is a key source of learners' knowledge about, and orientation within the social world. Curriculum 2005 was introduced in 1997 to provide a common curriculum and to remove bias, discrimination and social injustice. Founded on outcomes-based education and the values of the Constitution, it was intended to sweep away the legacy of mental underdevelopment, authoritarianism and rote learning (Emerging Voices; 2005: 81).

The apartheid curriculum devalued the rights of all and promoted a sense of superiority amongst whites and inferiority amongst black people. The post-apartheid curriculum is central to building a new sense of

citizenship and possibility. At its core is a commitment to human rights, equity and social justice. In order to achieve this it promotes learner-centredness, active learning, problem solving, critical and creative thinking, an understanding of the world, and the skills of evaluation and analysis (Emerging Voices; 2005; 81). The curriculum challenge educators, parents and learners alike to take a completely new look at education, and for purposes of sustainability, to break out of the classic, purist, look at education as meaning literacy, numeracy, and the acquisition of academic knowledge. This is not in any way meant to devalue the immense importance of acquiring such knowledge, but it means that over and above the acquisition of knowledge there should be exposure to the possibilities that are available once one has acquired an education, at whatever level that may be, and to take those educational skills, utilizing them in a way that will access opportunities for earning a living (Tager, 2003: 94). This suggests that there should be a wider framework than the one that exists at rural school at present, where educational processes are still steeped in traditional ways. This wider framework should deal, primarily, with the notion of sustainability (Africa Forum; 2003: 94) but in rural communities, where facilities are often so appalling that it is preferable for learners to sit under trees, the challenge to do so become simply another tiresome duty.

Are Curriculum 2005 and outcomes-based education implementable in rural schools? It has been argued amongst the educators that it is appropriate for schools that have small classes, i.e. say a class of 30-35 learners, and for qualified educators, but that it is inappropriate for schools in rural areas where classes are large, 60 or more learners, with limited resources and where educators are largely inadequately qualified to do what is expected of them. Although there are educators who do good work with limited resources, the majority of educators teach in tried and tested ways that do not challenge learners. Too many learners do not understand their textbooks. The excessive use of corporal punishment in schools also suggest that, despite the new curriculum, classrooms are not places where learners' rights are respected, democratic relationships between educators and learners are fostered (Emerging Voices; 2005: 81 – 82).

Educators who are not satisfied with OBE give a long list of reasons for their dissatisfaction. They complain that it does not cater for rural areas and is difficult to implement since training in OBE is inadequate, overcrowded classrooms make attention to individual work difficult, learners become too relaxed, no real learning takes place, parents struggle with their children's schoolwork if they are uneducated, there are insufficient learning materials, OBE requires too much paperwork, the implementation of OBE takes too much time and it is expensive, educators are confused and there is a lack of discipline at school. Consequently, many educators indicated that they have lost interest in their work because of OBE (Emerging Voices; 2005: 103).

Educators regard quality education as being difficult to achieve. The most important problems cited are lack of teaching aids, poor infrastructure, and lack of co-operation and shortages of skilful educators. The lack of

teaching aids is an issue that is often cited. Textbooks are central teaching aids and constitute an extremely important source of learning but they need to be accessible and understandable. However, it is quite clear that without the necessary resources quality education cannot be achieved. Therefore, it goes without saying that learners learn what the educators tell them and are ignorant of anything they are not directly told. Without a library they have limited opportunities to discover ideas and information for themselves. The new curriculum expects learners to become independent and critical thinkers. How can that happen when the resources available do not permit independent inquiry? Learners can and do have opinions on the teaching materials and equipment that are essential aspects of making OBE work, like libraries and books, TV and radio, apparatus for natural science and many more (Emerging Voices; 2005: 105).

## **2.6 EDUCATORS IN RURAL SCHOOLS**

Educators are expected to be mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and counselors, assessors and learning area or phase specialists. Within each of these roles they are expected to demonstrate well-defined practical, foundational and reflexive competencies. In the midst of this bewildering array of roles and demands educators are struggling to deliver education of adequate quality and they are blamed for not doing so (Emerging Voices; 2005: 108).

The roles that educators are expected to perform, alongside expectations that they will implement a curriculum that will empower children and transform the classroom, are extremely difficult. They place a burden on teachers in rural schools that they simply cannot carry. Little in their own educational experience and teacher training has prepared them for these roles and expectations. Neither their situation in rural schools nor their working conditions is encouraging (Emerging Voices; 2005:109).

Criticism of educators encompasses a complex set of issues related to their lack of qualifications, subject knowledge, commitment and sense of vocation. In many communities there is a deep rift between educators and community members. Some communities are proud of their schools and educators. However, in many instances interviews revealed that parents like educators who are hard working, who give children homework, make contact with them when there is a problem, are patient and helpful with children and who make children want to go to school. These educators certainly exist. What parents do *not* like are infrequent attendance by educators, assaults on children and the use of children for tasks other than learning, and this is for too often the case (Emerging Voices; 2005: 113).

Educators are important within the communities because they make a difference as to whether schooling is meaningful for learners or not. Their relationship with parents and learners, and the school community at large, influence the overall ethos and climate of teaching and learning. Along with curriculum, the quality of

education is usually linked to their qualifications and commitment. Educators *can* make learners feel safe, respected and valued. As such, they are vital as role models but in their everyday practices and language they can also reinforce prejudice, discrimination and sexism. Many educators in rural areas, for example, require learners to perform chores like sweeping the classroom floor or going to fetch something from the shop. These small practices make all the difference to what children learn and do not learn about themselves as gendered beings..

### **2.6.1 The quality of teaching personnel in the rural areas.**

Their motivations for going into teaching are varied but strong motives seem to be family histories, few alternatives choices, role models, poor guidance and the availability of colleges of education. Conditions in rural schools, as well as earning capacity and aspirations, lead to teachers from rural areas preferring not to live near the schools where they teach. Most educators do not live near the school in which they teach. On average, they live 30 km away from the school (Emerging Voices; 2005: 111 – 112). They also send their own children to schools outside the rural communities.

Although most of the educators in rural areas are involved in some form of community activity, this involvement is not in the communities in which they teach, but in the ones where they live; in the church, on community infrastructure improvement work such as the municipal counselors, water committee, sports, funeral and burial societies as well as cultural activities, youth development and women's organisations. Some are HIV/ AIDS facilitators and counselors, helping orphans to find grants' and RDP houses. This has implications for, amongst other things, absenteeism and connections with the communities in which they teach.

For many teachers in rural areas teaching was a second choice. They wanted to be nurses, lawyers, journalists, social workers, magistrates and so on, but because of financial constraints they could not fulfill these career aspirations. One teacher described how he was originally not interested in teaching, but gradually came to love it:

*I actually not interested in becoming a teacher, but I wanted to be a lawyer but because of the financial constraints I could not become a lawyer. After matriculation in 1985 I worked for three years as an assistant teacher. From there a new college was opened in my village, because I did not know what to do, I applied, I was admitted. It was a new college with many facilities. After six months I felt motivated and I started to love teaching, because of the availability of the facilities, like the language laboratory, science laboratory, library and many others.*

Rural educators' highest qualification is an M+ 3 or category C, which was probably gained from the now closed colleges of education. Educators in rural schools have their roots amongst the rural poor. Their parents are domestic workers, casual workers or unemployed. The overwhelming majority has children, and their partners are either unemployed, educators themselves or are employed in a range of semi-skilled occupations (Emerging Voices; 2005: 111 – 112).

### **2.6.2 Working conditions in rural areas**

Problems experienced by educators in rural schools are, amongst others, poorly resourced schools - inadequate buildings, water, sanitation and electricity, libraries and computers – a lack of infrastructure, including transport, communications, shops, banks, ATMs and other essential services; a lack of suitable housing, by urban standards, or no housing at all; little or no access to training and upgrading facilities, either through contact or via the internet; high transport costs and wear and tear on vehicles. This means that educators' commitment to the school and the wider community is necessarily reduced, extramural activities may suffer and long distances, poor roads and inclement weather are likely to impact on attendance. Under these conditions, educator absenteeism is a frequent occurrence. Other reasons for absenteeism include being sick, and attending official meetings, official workshops or conferences. Irrespective of the reasons, educator absenteeism is a major cause of concern for parents. One parent in Venda had to remark as follows:

*Educators come late to school. Sometimes they do not teach. School sometimes breaks early without parents' knowledge. Sometimes the school breaks for educators to do shopping in town especially during month end. Parents do not have any say in decision – making processes (Emerging Voices; 2005: 115).*

### **2.6.3 The relationship between educators and learners**

It is expected that the relationship between the educator and a learner should be that of teaching and learning. However, on the whole, the relationship between educators and learners appear to be cold and unpleasant, with many learners complaining that:

*Educators at our school are very cruel and they do beat us. They talk to us harshly. They also like to send us to the shops during lesson time. Some educators cannot explain concepts to our understanding and when asking questions for clarity, we are told that we are stupid. That decreases the love for schooling in us. The manner in which they teach us is full of ruthlessness. Those things are embarrassing, and you can't concentrate, and each time an educator comes in, you know that you are going to be heartbroken.*

There is a strong feeling that educators are not committed to their work. At the same time it has been discovered that in most public schools in the rural area children are not motivated as far as education is concerned. In this regard educators indicate that they are helpless in the face of children's late coming, absenteeism and poor concentration in class, and more so in the absence of adequate teaching and learning materials. Their frustrations are often taken out on the learners (Emerging Voices; 2005: 116).

#### **2.6.4 The role of parents in a school situation**

It is important for parents to be involved with, and supportive of their children's education. Children feel proud and encouraged when their own parents participate in school activities. They feel encouraged when their parents are informed about their progress in school. How involved parents feel with the teaching and learning of their children is partly reflected in the relationship they have with the schools and educators. Despite their support for, and vision of, what education might do to lift families from poverty, they do not have much of a relationship with schools.

There is a pressing need for a sound relationship between the educators, learners and parents. The relationship that parents have with the school can be measured by the amount of contact they have with their children's educators to discuss issues such as discipline, academic performance and attendance. Parents should continuously monitor their children's progress. If not satisfied, they should get closer to the educators for clarity. Parents can also influence children's school outcomes in ways that have nothing to do with parental engagement with school, such as by setting high expectations and being loving and supportive at home (Emerging Voices; 2005: 119). According to Henderson and Berla (1994: 8), the single best predictor of student success in school is the level of parental involvement in a child's education. The benefits of parental involvement include improved academic achievement, reduced absenteeism, improved school behaviour, greater academic motivation, and lower drop out rates (Henderson & Berla, 1994: 8).

However, the reality is that many parents seldom set foot on the school premises. There is a strong belief in education but a generally distant relationship between many parents and guardians and schools, with parental involvement seemingly confined to uniforms and fees. Many understand the need for involvement but do not find it easy to act on this understanding. This may be due to tenuous or non-existent literacy, often combined with embarrassment about their financial state, non-payment of school fees and unfamiliarity with the school system.

#### **2.6.5 School Governing Bodies**

South African parents and guardians have an accepted role in the education of their children. Since 1994 they are required to accept primary legal responsibility for educating their children. They have the right to be

consulted about the form of that education their children receive and must be enabled to participate in its governance.

When the new government came to power in 1994, governance in most black schools had all but collapsed. As a part of the process of rebuilding the school system, the government passed the SASA as an attempt to give parents the responsibility of managing the schools their children attend and of legitimating participation in the life of the school.

The Act required that schools establish School Governing Bodies composed of parents, educators, learners (in secondary schools) and members of the school support staff. This structure was to develop school policy across a host of areas and to ensure that the school managers would carry out this policy. School Governing Bodies are the organisations intended to extend control of school education to parents and others concerned in the process.

How do parents relate to formal structures intended to promote their involvement, such as School Governing Bodies? There are many problems in running School Governing Bodies in impoverished rural areas. Even in a well-run school where relations between staff and parents seem good, issues such as low attendance at School Governing Body meetings, lack of skills and the difficulty of persuading impoverished families to pay fees are constant problems (Emerging Voices; 2005: 120).

### **2.6.6 Improving rural education**

Generally speaking, there is a general outcry for more up-to-date education in rural communities. Such an education is associated with Mathematics, Science and particularly, Computer technology. The idea is that rural learners will be unable to engage with the modern world or find jobs if they do not have a strong basis in Mathematics and Science, and if they are not exposed to technology from an early age. Inadequate Mathematics, Science and Technology education is seen as signaling the divide between rural and urban schools (Emerging Voices; 2005: 96).

In its quest to address the education problems, the Limpopo provincial government has taken the initiative, which has cost it a fortune, to establish comprehensive schools in the deep rural areas of the province, in the most underprivileged communities. These schools have been equipped with the necessary physical facilities such as a science laboratory, computer library, art room, music room, language laboratory, a hall for recreation and meetings and a needlework and clothing centre. It is hoped that these schools will help in the development of technical, academic and artistic abilities because comprehensive education should not just be about individual learners or groups of learners labeled by ability, class, gender or religion, but about the value placed on each learner and the expectations the comprehensive school of each of each of them.



Upon the establishment of these schools, parents had high expectations of these schools. They expected that their children would receive better education, acquire skills that would enable them to compete in the global market, and develop confidence in the learning process. As a result parents were supportive of the initiative. This is evidenced by an annually increasing enrollment rate. The following figures indicate the enrollment in the past three years from Comprehensive schools in the Waterberg district (Northam) and also from the Vhembe district in Venda.

### 2006

VHEMBE DISTRICT	Total Enrolment
	478
WATERBERG DISTRICT	Total Enrolment
	784

### 2005

VHEMBE DISTRICT	Total Enrolment
	436
WATERBERG DISTRICT	Total Enrolment
	707

### 2004

VHEMBE DISTRICT	Total Enrolment
	330
WATERBERG DISTRICT	Total Enrolment
	688

*Source: EMIS LIMPOPO EDUCATION DEPARTMENT*

### 2.6.7 Lessons learnt from the comprehensive schools of the world.

After the Second World War, the structure of post-primary education in most West European countries was still largely the same as in the 19th century. Notwithstanding the many types and forms of education, secondary schools could be categorized into different systems, with a difference in curriculum and in the social origin of the people. In Belgium, as in several other countries, general secondary education was vertically divided into a classified stream with a Latin and/or Greek-based curriculum; a modern stream without Latin or Greek, and technical and vocational streams, with the modern and classified streams being more theoretically oriented and the vocational being more practical.



In the course of the twentieth century, traditional education system came under pressure. The main objection was that it did not respond to existing social and economic needs and expectations. Especially in the decade after the Second World War when there was a deficiency of skilled workers and a growth of social demands, educational innovation obtained its place on political agendas. In the first years after the war the basis for future reforms was already delineated by projects in different countries; The Education Act (1944) in Britain, the Swedish School Commission (1946), the Langevin – Wallon report in France (1947), the publications of educational adviser “Marion Coulon in Belgium (1947). Common to these projects was the tuning in of the different sections in secondary education. (Paedagogica Historica; 2004: 194)

In response to these trends and demands a structural innovation – comprehensive schooling - was introduced in secondary education in most of the West European countries. Italy began the implementation of comprehensive middle schools in 1962. In Sweden, the common Grundskola existed as an experiment since 1949 and was generalized in 1962. In 1969 the Education Ministers of the German Lander decided to start an experiment in comprehensive schooling. In England and Wales, the Labour government in 1966 adopted the comprehensive structure, which had existed alongside grammar, technical and secondary modern schools since the 1944 Education Act. In 1969 the Belgian government introduced a structure called Reformed Secondary Education.

Our focus will mainly be on the Belgian experience of comprehensive schooling. Traditionally Belgian schools were structurally divided into three networks; the state public sector, the local public sector and the private sector (Paedagogica Historica, 2004: 195). Comprehensive schools were introduced in Belgium in 1969 by two Socialist Ministers of Education in 1969 – 1970 (Paedagogica Historica, 2004: 200) who motivated the change by referring to it as a “preparation for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Paedagogica Historica: 2004: 193) because, as Henkens indicated, these so-called comprehensive schools brought together all branches in one school.

While there was initial protest against this type of schools from the start, communities gradually came to understand them: all Belgian state public schools went comprehensive in the 1970 and the number of comprehensive private schools grew rapidly until more or less 1980. In the 1970s, the number of schools that changed over to the new structure grew dramatically in both the public and private networks. In 1975 the Flemish Ministers of Education imposed the comprehensive school structure on all the institutions under the Flemish State Public Education Network. Not only was the timing of comprehensive schooling different in Flemish and French-speaking public schools, but there were also some differences in structure and curriculum (Paedagogica Historica, 2004: 198).

It should be noted that the main objectives of the Reformed Secondary Education was to provide all students with a broader basis education, postponing the choice of specialization and making it more dependent on the individual aptitudes and interests of the students than on their socio-economic background. Pupils were observed during the second year of secondary education - that is, their capabilities, interests and talents were stimulated and studied. On the basis of the observation, pupils would be assisted in their choices for further specialization.

There were protests against comprehensive schools rights from the start but it was mainly in the late 1970s and the 1980s that comprehensive schools came under siege in most of the countries that had initiated the reform in the 1960s. In the UK not all Labour MP's were convinced that the comprehensive system was the best thing for Britain youth. They perceived that the move to comprehensive schools as threatening to destroy existing good schools. On the other hand, local conservative councils were often proud of their "progressive educational policy". They argued that comprehensive education was as much the property of the Right as the Left. In Belgium, several Socialist MP's resisted the generalization of comprehensive education in state public schools, mainly because they feared that this would be disadvantageous as regards competition with the private sector. In Belgium, many progressives saw Reformed Secondary Education as a missed opportunity; for them, comprehensives did not go anywhere near far enough, and reformed education failed in the objective of producing social transformation. The reason why comprehensive education came under pressure in these countries in the 1980s could be related to the re-emergence of a technical rationality. Since the economic crisis of the late 1970s, the social objectives of reformed education have become outmoded. Recession and unemployment led to less trust in the future. Parents began to pay more attention to the academic quality of schools, the market value of diplomas and, subsequently, labour opportunities for their children.

One could explain the contrapositions regarding comprehensive education from an ideological point of view. Usually, the sides for and against reformed education are identified with social groups that are supporters of a progressive or a conservative ideology, respectively. Conservative educationists have tried in England and Wales to defend the variety of schools envisaged in the 1944 Education Act against the enforced uniformity of comprehensive education. The progressives would encourage the comprehensive structure because it would promote social mobility and the conservatives would oppose the system for the same reasons. Conservatives did not want a uniform national plan and saw no reason why good grammar schools, technical or modern schools should be swept away by something that may be no better and might be worse. They also argued that the educational offered by comprehensive schools contradicted the conservative philosophy of education.

As a result of the resistance the number of comprehensive schools in the many countries were decreased while in other countries comprehensive structure were adjusted to a more moderate form. The ongoing struggle between catholic comprehensive and traditional schools, however, led to a compromise created by the catholic educational authorities, a fusion of comprehensive and traditional elements. It has been established that the motives for adopting the comprehensive structure, or maintaining the traditional form, were often linked to competition between schools. Comprehensive schools advertised in the early years the benefits of the reform, such as better pupil guidance, improved teaching and testing methods etc., in order to lure pupils away from traditional schools. On the other hand, in the 1980s, when the appeal for comprehensive education was decreasing, the remaining traditional schools, in the network of catholic schools, where the adoption of the comprehensive structure was left to choice, were competing with both state and catholic comprehensive schools. This small minority of traditional schools started marketing excellence and tradition to cream off the brighter children and those of higher social class, thus hindering the comprehensive schools in realizing their objectives. In Germany, though, Mitter (1991:163) indicates that comprehensive schools that are being set up on the West German model represent an alternative with a view to offering differentiation according to achievement levels and individuals' interest, although the chances of the comprehensive schools gaining ground appear relatively modest as everything points to strong preferences for schools within a more differentiated form of lower secondary education (European Journal of Education, 1991:163-164)

### **2.6.8 Experiences of comprehensive schools in the South African context**

Two comprehensive schools - Katlehong comprehensive school in the Gauteng province and Mphanama comprehensive school in the Mpumalanga province in Middelburg, Mhluzi Township - were visited and a survey was conducted with the Srespective school management teams (SMTs). The main objective for the survey was to have an idea of the operations and purpose for the establishment of these comprehensive schools.

In Katlehong members of the SMT were interviewed and it was established that the school serves learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12, with an enrolment of 1 300 learners and 35 educators and a general support staff of 6 members. The school is situated in the outskirts of Katlehong Township, with dilapidated buildings and was established in the early 60s. Communities it serves are mainly blacks from Katlehong and the adjacent established settlements where RDP houses have recently been erected.

The school offers technical streams, i.e. subjects that have a technical/vocational orientation and science streams. For technical, the following are offered: Metalwork, Technical Drawing, Technology, Motor Mechanics, Civil Engineering and Electrician. In the Science stream the following are offered: English, Zulu, South Sotho, Tsonga, Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and Technology. However, two languages must be chosen from this stream i.e. English is always the medium of instruction and a mother tongue of the

learner's choice. The main objective for introducing the technical subjects is because the school is situated in a primarily industrial area, and as a result learners could be absorbed in the manufacturing world on completion of their studies. In other words the school is strategically situated at a vantage point where the workforce for the adjacent industries could be drawn from. Also the school enjoys enormous support from these industries in the form of donations in kind, e.g. computers, etc.

Educators are well qualified, since most of them are university graduates with the kind of skills required by the school. Nevertheless the results for the past two years dropped tremendously: in 2004, the school obtained a 55% pass rate in Grade 12 (Matric) and in 2005 this dropped further to a 27% pass. The SMT indicated that poor discipline contributed towards this state of affairs, with learners not taking their work seriously and the majority, especially boys, using drugs and other intoxicating substances during normal school hours. Such learners constitute a major setback, taking matric results into consideration. It was also indicated that learners do not come to school regularly. Even though discipline is a major problem in this institution, parents do not contribute meaningfully towards the problem at meetings. In fact, majority does not attend such meetings, leaving educational matters to educators and educational authorities.

In Mphanama comprehensive school, the situation was a little bit better. The school-going population is derived from Mhluzi Township and most learners commute from neighbouring farm areas. The school has better facilities, i.e. double storey buildings with laboratories and an enrolment of 950 learners with 32 educators, 8 general support staff and security personnel. The school offers two streams, namely, a general and a technical stream:

The school offers education from Grade 8 to Grade 12, with subjects differing from Grade to Grade. For instance in the Grade 8 General Stream learners are able to choose from nine areas (subjects) in both Grade 8 and 9. For the sake of this study, I shall concentrate on Grade 12 subjects.

### **General Streams**

Zulu  
Sepedi  
English  
Afrikaans  
Science  
Mathematics  
Biology  
Geography  
History  
Electricians Work  
Fitting & Turning  
Accounting

### **Technical Streams**

Zulu  
Sepedi  
English  
Afrikaans  
Science  
Mathematics  
Biology  
Technical Drawing  
Motor Mechanics  
Electronics  
Electricians Work  
Fitting & Turning

### **General Streams**

Travel & Tourism  
Home Economics  
Accounting  
Business Economics

### **Technical Streams**

Welding & Metalwork  
Travel & Tourism  
Home Economics

From the above listed subjects, learners are expected to choose 7 examinable subjects and two additional subjects.

It has been established that the school is running very well, without major obstacles, and that the results are also very good. Moreover, the school enjoys the support from major industries in Middelburg that, in return is provided with a skilled workforce. During 2005, the school registered a pass rate of 80%, which is laudable and appreciated.

From the above scenario, it is clear that both Comprehensive Secondary Schools were established for the same reason, namely to promote the technical and science expertise that South Africa needs so desperately during this technological era. The technical stream was meant to enable large numbers of learners to acquire the skills that would make them employable and able to create their own jobs. The two schools enjoy support from both the local industries and the department of Education and also the communities they serve in the form of funding. However, discipline in both schools constitutes a major setback. The Katlehong Comprehensive School indicated that learners have developed a negative attitude towards the school management and the governing body whereas learners at Mphanana Comprehensive School do not come to school on time and at times do indulge in intoxicating substances such as liquor during school hours.

The difference drawn from the South African Comprehensive schools and that of Western Europe, lie in the fact that Western Europe Comprehensive Schools cater for learners with different abilities, starting from lower grades up to Senior phase or grades with the idea of maintaining continuity in respect of learning areas, whereas in the South African context the two schools cater for the Senior phase only.

### **2.6.9 Summary**

Comprehensive rural schools though affording learners access to a viable curriculum and to effective instruction, experience problems of support and commitment to education of cultural values instilled in girls and boys. Girls have a strong attachment to marriage and child care while boys on the other hand prefer agricultural farming. Most parents encourage education around issues of sexuality and transition into adulthood, e.g. initiation schools. There are many problems taking place in rural comprehensive schools,

thus making it difficult for government to address them effectively. Priority should be given to how rural comprehensive schools can better encourage learners to incorporate traditional values to educational values. The government should, as a priority, establish these modern facilities in all rural schools to address the challenges of geographic isolation. This leads to our next chapter focusing on working towards effective schools.

In this chapter quite a number of challenging factors have been discussed. These are the facts that need a serious attention in order to try to redress the imbalances, that are always present in our rural schools. The fact is there are many problems which have been established concerning the inadequate facilities, that present the smooth running of the rural schools. There is poor infrastructure and sanitation, poor quality of classroom, inadequate supply of learning support materials, that come late to school or at times not at all.

Educators conditions of service is so much appalling. They are not given adequate training on the implementation of the new curriculum statement. Therefore, a service of workshops need to be organised by the department in order to empower educators about this new methodology. Parents must be drawn in order to support the schools gearing towards the development of the school. Finally the department of education, as depicted from the ministerial committee report must give much attention to the rural schools in order to bring about visible changes.

## CHAPTER 3

### WORKING TOWARDS EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

School effectiveness is the degree to which schools achieve their goals. Basically an analysis of the effectiveness of a school or any other type of organization is an analysis of means and goals or, stated differently, of antecedent conditions and effectiveness criteria (Schereens, 1999: 37). Other concepts often used as synonyms for effectiveness include *efficiency*, *productivity* and *the survival power of an organization*. Effectiveness can, therefore, be described as the extent to which the desired output is achieved. The concept of effectiveness is clearly related to means-end relationships. When applied to educational phenomena, effectiveness refers to the degree to which educational means or processes result in the attainment of educational goals.

Schereens argues that school effectiveness should also focus on the quality of instructional leadership. This position with respect to leadership and school management implies that effective school leaders should not just concern themselves with the classroom management alone, but should also take care of the smooth running of administrative and organizational matters. Instructional leadership means that the school leader is overtly concerned with the curriculum, the learning and teaching in classrooms and the records of learner achievement (Schereens, 1999:69).

On the other hand, Potter and Powell (1992:5) describe effectiveness as the extent to which the school satisfies external criteria, such as the demands of parents and learners, and does well against comparable institutions in key areas of performance such as examination results. According to them, schools exist to bring benefit to young people, and in order to be deemed “good”, a school must stand up to scrutiny.

#### 3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

The poor standard of education currently available to children in rural schools where the lack of classrooms results in many children being taught under trees, and where a lack of textbooks, stationery and educational aids is exacerbated by the prevalence of inadequately qualified educators, perpetuates the poverty cycle by not providing children with future skills they can use competitively in the labour markets (Tager, 2003: 94). It therefore behooves the stakeholders to find better means of creating effective schools in the rural communities.



Effective schools tend to share common characteristics. They are distinguished in that they are well organized, school activities are planned soundly and properly and, above all, those who lead them adopt a consultative management approach. The charisma of leadership has been cited by Covey, in terms of seven habits typical of highly effective people (Covey: 1992). Effective schools tend to be proactive and have a powerful vision. They have foresight and therefore always plan ahead. They adopt a positive attitude towards life in spite of all the challenges and perplexities that may come along the way. They believe in striving for excellence and quality work, didactically and outside the classroom environment. All their stakeholders embrace the spirit and attitude of win-win and communicate effectively with them. In other words, these schools seek first to understand before seeking to be understood. Covey (1992: 235) calls this kind of communication, i.e. communication that result in mutual understanding and respect for one another, emphatic communication.

These schools are characterized by the ability to synergize. They believe strongly in the creative cooperation of stakeholders. Force and physical power are always relegated to the periphery with regular communication and feedback. School managers of effective schools always remain in charge of the situation, control, guidance and supervision of their institutions. Even if the leader or the principal is physically away from the school, communications remain a binding force amongst the educators, learners and the School Governing Body. Fighting and misunderstandings regarding pertinent issues are tackled openly and freely to the satisfaction of all people concerned. Effective schools attach strong value to character formation: the codes of conduct for learners and educators alike are displayed unashamedly on their notice boards and the school constitution in its totality is respected by all members of the community.

Effective schools emphasize written work in order to consolidate their didactic efforts, arguing that it is pointless to teach throughout the day, weeks and months without testing the learner and students regularly to discover whether they understand what they have been taught. Class and homework assignments are regarded as crucial to successful teaching and learning, keeping learners on their toes throughout the year.

During South Africa's period of transition, there is much interest from various educational constituencies to discover what the characteristics of effective comprehensive schools are and how best to go about improving existing ones. To this purpose the new government initiated a number of comprehensive rural school development and improvement programmes focusing on different aspects of rural comprehensive school life, including programmes on management, teacher development, teaching methodology, learner assessment, organizational development and many others. Even so, research on rural comprehensive school development projects in South Africa over this period reveal that these initiatives have not had a significant impact on teaching and learning and/or on subsequent learner performance (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean: 2005). One of the main reasons for the failure of these projects, despite their intentions



and excellent content in many cases, was the flawed implementation of many programmes initiated at rural comprehensive schools.

Whilst effectiveness may be considered at different levels or sub-units within the school, the reasons for greater progress at one school rather than another are at the heart of effectiveness. One of the main features of research in this area is the attempt to find causal factors leading to increased effectiveness. The outcomes of research tend to be presented in the form of factors common to effective schools and no two definitions of the characteristics of the effective school are exactly the same (Bush and Coleman, 2000). Nevertheless, despite the hazards of evaluating school effectiveness, there are a number of characteristics shared by all effective schools (Levine; 1992: 30; Harber; 1999: 14):

From the above it is evident that effective rural comprehensive schools prioritize a rigorous instructional program that provides all learners with equitable opportunities to learn and enables them to master challenging content, skills, and learning strategies and the continuous engagement of the school community in dynamic assessment processes, reflection and innovation to inform curriculum development and instructional strategies, thereby meeting learner needs and addressing achievement gaps.

Partnerships with organizations strengthen the ability of the school to serve the academic and developmental needs of its learners and to forge bonds with learners' families. Effective partnerships help keep the school in touch with the wider community and professional networks, enable it to capitalize on opportunities and resources that support learner success and increase its sustainability. Integration of Technology into teaching and learning allow learners to access and analyze information, communicate ideas and express themselves creatively. Educators have adequate equipment and professional development to enable them to implement technology enhanced lessons. Learners learn to navigate diverse information sources, including print, visual and audio materials, through the explicit teaching of information literacy skills (New Visions for Public Schools; 2006). Therefore, rural comprehensive school effectiveness is related to collegial, collaborative interactions among the key actors in the school (Newmann and Wehlage; 1995).

### **3.3 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The terms "leadership" and "management" while distinguishable are often used interchangeably. Leadership is frequently seen as an aspect of management, with "born leaders" being characterized as charismatic individuals with visionary flair and the ability to motivate and enthuse others, even if they lack the managerial skills to plan, organize effectively or control resources (Law and Glover; 2000:13). The difference between leadership and management is that leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration, while management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done, and working effectively

with people. A school principal has to be both leader and manager. Effective school principals are proactive and see help that is needed. They also nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Furthermore, school effectiveness is related to collegial, collaborative interactions among the key actors in the school (Newman and Wehlage; 1995)

### **3.3.1 What is Leadership?**

#### **3.3.1.1 Defining Leadership**

Leadership is a much-debated subject, and numerous books have been written on the topic. Definitions of leadership abound. Bass (in Love, 1994: 30) divides leadership definitions into the following twelve categories: a focus on various group processes, personality and its effects, the art of inducing compliance, the exercise of influence, an act or behaviour, a form of persuasion, a power relation, an instrument of goal achievement and many others.

According to Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2001:9) leadership occurs whenever one person attempts to influence the behavior of an individual or group, regardless of the reason while Farley (2002) argues that, like talent for music and art, talent for leadership involves much knowledge and disciplined practice. Leadership is a social transaction in which one person influences the other. People in authority do not necessarily exert leadership. Rather, effective people in administrative positions combine authority and leadership to assist an organization to achieve its goals.

Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford (2000) indicate that leadership is essentially the process of building and maintaining a sense of vision, culture and interpersonal relationships, whereas management is defined as the co-ordination, support and monitoring of organizational activities. They maintain that leadership is about having and articulating vision, ordering priorities, getting others to go with you, constantly reviewing what you are doing and holding onto things you value while management is about the functions, procedures and systems by which you realize the vision.

Regarded as one of the fundamental management functions, leadership is also defined by Cronje, Du Toit, Marais and Motlatla (2004: 174) as the process of directing the behaviour of others towards the accomplishment of predetermined goals. It involves elements such as influencing people, giving orders, motivating people, either as individuals or as groups, in managing conflict and communicating with subordinates.

#### **3.3.1.2 Good leadership qualities**

Sterling and Davidoff (2000: 22) list the following qualities associated with leadership: accountability, discipline, flexibility, courage, humility, integrity, tolerance, inner strength, confidence, assertiveness, sensitivity, gentleness, perseverance, empathy, loyalty, compassion, consistency, decisiveness,

enthusiasm, honesty, dedication, transparency, staying in power, dependability and fairness. In research done by De Witt (1982) and Teichler (1982), the following qualities are emphasized: adaptability, thorough knowledge of human nature, good interpersonal relationships, a sense of responsibility, a willingness to serve, sincere involvement, the ability to work in a team, empathy, respect and warmth, justice, genuineness, clarity and humanity.

### **3.3.1.3 Principles of Leadership**

In their book, *'The courage to lead'*, Sterling and Davidoff (2000) discuss the principles identified by Love (1994: 59 – 65). These principles form the basis for the following discussion:

#### **a) Having a holistic perspective**

Leadership means having a holistic perspective. This means being able to see the big picture. It means understanding the school as an organization and also being aware of one's own capacity for leadership. These aspects belong together as the growth of the leader has a bearing on the development of the organization.

#### **b) Bringing core values to life**

Leadership means bringing core values to life. Values are at the heart of organizational life and the leader needs to assist in identifying, nurturing and modeling worthwhile values. This is a process that will assist in building a healthy organizational climate.

#### **c) Encouraging a vision**

Leadership means encouraging a vision. A leader is a person who stimulates the formulation of and commitment to a vision in co-operation with other members of the organization. This aspect is so important that it will be discussed separately. Vision and leadership go hand in hand. Imagination and creativity are required to visualize the future direction and destination of the school, taking into account the present contextual realities. Commitment, motivation and dedication are required to carry this vision through and in the process the leader play an important part. The leader is the most important communicator of the vision.

#### **d) Focusing on the core business**

Leadership means focusing on the core business of the organization. In the school setting this means building up the school as a learning organization. Developing and maintaining a culture of teaching and learning in the school setting is essentially what is required from the education leader. Literally, everything that the leader does and every action in the entire school setting must have this as its focus.

### **e) Understanding and acknowledging**

Leadership in rural comprehensive schools requires understanding and acknowledging the needs and contributions of others. This means that rural comprehensive school leaders must understand the staff they work with so that they can make profitable use of their strengths and encourage and support those people who need their assistance of the leader to grow further. Good leaders take time to understand people, recognize their needs, acknowledge their contributions, and encourage and assist them to fulfill their potential.

### **f) Encouraging teamwork**

Leadership means encouraging teamwork and equipping others as leaders. Leadership is about getting things done through other people, which necessarily also means assisting people to work together in teams. To be able to assist teamwork effectively the leader needs knowledge about the dynamics involved in the process of getting things done through teamwork. Closely associated with team building is the idea of equipping others to be effective leaders and to take up leadership positions. The leader must constantly seek to identify and develop leadership talent with a view to assisting others to maximize their potential so that they may contribute to the effective functioning of the school as learning institution.

### **g) Flexible response**

Leadership requires flexibility. There may be routines and procedures for some aspects of a school's functioning, but there is no blueprint for guiding leaders through many of the situation they will face as leaders. Some situations are full of complexities, conflicts and contradictions. A true leader does not shy away from these but confronts the difficult and uncomfortable aspects that emerge. Each leadership challenge is unique and will require a unique response from the leader. The more experience they gain and the more leaders develop their character and potential, the easier they will find it to rise to the challenges facing them.

### **h) Modeling the way**

Leadership means modeling the behavior needed to deal with certain situations. Leaders need to set an example in order to be confident as followers. People look to the leader for clarity and direction. Leaders must be people who encourage scrutiny and emulation of their own life and example. This again requires integrity, a leadership quality that we have discussed before.

### **i) Being of Service**

Leadership means being of service. According to Osei-Mensah (1990: 13) greatness is measured by the way we give ourselves in service to each other. Leadership should be exercised for the common good and not for selfish reasons. Osei-Mensah (1990; 10) mentions that contemporary leadership in the world is

concerned with status, domination and control as opposed to the ideal of being of service while Love (1994: 60) states that a certain willingness to use others, the ability to dominate a group and the relentless pursuit of clearly defined career goals have almost become virtues in Western culture.

**j) Maximizing strengths and minimizing limitations.**

Leadership means maximizing strengths and minimizing limitations. Leaders need accurate knowledge of their abilities, capacities, gifts and talents in order to be able to maximize them. Effective leaders will, however, not only maximize their own strengths, but also those of others in the schools. Maximizing everyone's strengths and minimizing their limitations is to the benefit of the whole organization. Different leaders also have different strengths and different types of effective leadership styles, and there is a genuine need for this type of variety in organizations (Love, 1994: 68-78).

### **3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERS**

Being an effective school leader requires a consistent focus and enormous energy. According to Kaplan and Owings (2001: 85 [628]), effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes. They cite the following indications as of paramount importance to the effectiveness of a school leader, arguing that s/he should be able to:

- Facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- Advocate, nurture and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- Ensure management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.
- Collaborate with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Act with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.
- Understand, respond to, and influence the larger political, socio – economic, legal and cultural context.
- Facilitate development and implementations of the school improvements plan with aligned professional development that supports vision and operational philosophy.

Studies undertaken in the UK by Day et al (2000) on the performance of 12 successful principals identify common threads that resonate with the South African situation. What is apparent from this UK study is that good school leadership leads to a good school. It was found that the 12 chosen head teachers were very resilient under changing and stressful conditions and did not “give up”. They were also very ethical in their

approach to the work situation. More specifically, Day et al (2000) suggested that the six core characteristics of effective school leaders are that they:

- Have a clear personal vision of what they want to achieve.
- Are in the thick of things, working alongside their colleagues.
- Respect teachers' autonomy, protecting them from extraneous demands.
- Look ahead, anticipate change and prepare people for it, so that it doesn't surprise or disempower them.
- Are pragmatic, able to grasp the realities of the political and economic context and to negotiate and compromise.
- Are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purpose for the school.

### **3.4.1 The management task of education leaders**

It is not possible to lead and manage people and school activities in a vacuum: the external environment always has an effect on schools and the way in which they are and should be managed. In this regard, South African school leaders and managers must always take into account the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Bill of Rights as the supreme laws of South Africa as well as national and provincial legislation related to education and departmental policy.

### **3.4.2 The Constitution and the Bill of Rights**

Prior to 1993, Parliamentary Supremacy or Sovereignty prevailed in South Africa. According to this doctrine, Parliament comprises the elected representatives of the people and the manifestation of its will should be unassailable and supreme. This means that legislation passed by Parliament cannot be challenged in a court of law. The Westminster system in the United Kingdom is, in the main, premised on the notion of Parliamentary Supremacy. Under this system the courts were only able to entertain a challenge against and to set aside an Act to Parliament if the legislation was not passed in a procedurally correct manner. Under this system a law could not be set aside because its content was immoral or harsh. In short, Parliament was omnipotent and could do as it pleased, and the apartheid Parliament did just that (Govender; 2004: 27).

Section 1 of the Constitution provides that the Republic of South Africa is one sovereign, democratic state, founded on the following **values**:

- Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms
- Non – racialism and non – sexism
- Supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law
- Universal adult suffrage, a national common voters' roll, regular elections and a multiparty system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.

The Constitution was adopted by the people of South Africa as their **supreme law** and is therefore the most important document in the legal system of the country. It was adopted in the spirit of reconciliation and co-operation. The Constitution is protected and enforced by independent courts such as the Constitutional Court. Not even parliament can pass laws that are not in line with the Constitution. Previously, in the old system, Parliament was supreme and could pass any law it wanted to. It is important to remember that all government bodies, including Parliament, are subject to the Constitution and that any law (including parliamentary and provincial legislation as well as e.g. school rules), and all conduct (e.g. a decision by an education authority or governing body to suspend a learner) that is inconsistent with the Constitution is invalid and can be struck down by the courts (Bray (2000 p: 5 -11).

The most important **characteristics** of the Constitution can be summarized as follows:

- The Constitution is supreme and all government bodies are subordinate to the Constitution and their laws and actions must be in line with it.
- The Constitution provides for a democratic system of government in which democratic principles play a central role.
- A Bill of Rights (chapter 2) of the Constitution protects everyone's fundamental rights.
- In the Constitution provision is made for three spheres of government (national, provincial and local level). These spheres are distinctive, but also interdependent and interrelated (Joubert, 2001: 8).

The authors of the Manifesto describe the Constitution as a vision of a different society based on equity, justice and freedom for all. It is a call to all South Africans to build a just and free democratic society in which the potential of each person is freed. In the South African context, the Manifesto on Values, Human Rights and Democracy (DOE 2001: 13 -20) identified ten values, which the authors describe as the **founding values** of the Constitution. These are:

#### **3.4.2.1 Democracy**

The Constitution commits all citizens to the establishment of a society based on “democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights”, and defines South Africa as a sovereign, democratic state, founded upon the value of “universal adult suffrage; a national common voters roll, regular elections and multi – party system of government”. It means that we are responsible for our own destinies since, through the electoral process, we run our country and our public institutions.

This is an inalienable right and one that needs to be carried into the education system from the highest level down to schools and other educational institutions. The implication is that all policies and laws developed must be founded on, protect and promote democratic principles. It means, moreover, that learners have to take responsibility for their own learning in their groups, learning at a young age that each of them is



responsible for his/her own destiny, at school, at home as well as later in life as adults participating in a democratic society.

#### **3.4.2.2 Social justice**

The Constitution establishes as a right the access to adequate housing, healthcare services, sufficient food and water, social security, and a basic education. Children specifically, enjoy the inalienable right “to basic nutrition, shelter, basic healthcare services and social services” and “to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation”. However, without the implementation of social justice to correct the injustices of the past, reconciliation will be impossible to achieve. The social justice in the Constitution has profound implications for education because it commits the State to ensuring that all South Africans have equal access to schooling and that they have access to such schooling in their mother tongue if they so desire. The schools should therefore be a space in which the core social values of social justice, tolerance, concern for human dignity and mutual respect are protected and promoted.

#### **3.4.2.3 Equality**

Section 9 of the Constitution states unequivocally that “everyone is equal before the law” and may not be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of “race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, language and birth”. The implications of this clause is spelt out in the South African Schools’ Act 84 of 1996: “All children must obtain equal education, and the state must strive towards giving all students the same access to resources and to personnel, and the same opportunities to realize their fullest potential”. The implied consequences of the equality clause are that it promotes values such as tolerance and respect for diversity.

Equality should underpin the relationships in rural comprehensive schools. Just as the State has an obligation not to discriminate unfairly against any of its citizens, so the rural comprehensive school has an obligation to protect everyone against any form of unfair discriminations. Understanding the value of equality and the practice of non-discrimination means not only understanding that you have these rights, as an educator or as a learner, but that others have them as well. Learning to get along with peers in the classroom situation will help learners to be tolerant towards others and respect the diverse groupings that make up the South African population.

#### **3.4.3.4 Non-racism and non-sexism**

The Constitution’s emphasis on the value of “non-racism and non-sexism” is aimed at creating practices that treat everybody as equals and at ensuring, specifically, redress of past imbalances where people were oppressed or devalued because of their race or their gender. For the values of non-racism and non-sexism to have any meaning, black learners and female learners have to be afforded the same opportunities to free their potential as white learners and male learners. Non-sexism also means, specifically, that female educators and learners are not subjected to sexual abuse or harassment or pregnancy. Educators can play



an important role in class to ensure that all learners develop a variety of skills and competencies: preventing them from being typecast. The social skills learned in small heterogeneous groups could promote respect, acceptance and tolerance for different groups. Educators should strive to ensure that tasks given to group members are not perceived as typically “boy’s” or girl’s tasks. The rural comprehensive educator should set the example by planning in such a manner that boy and girls get equal exposure to all kinds of tasks and skills. This means then that not only boys should act as leaders of groups, not only girls should be given the task of cleaning the area where they worked.

#### **3.4.2.5 *Ubuntu (human dignity)***

The postscript of the Interim Constitution (1993) states that there is a need in South Africa “for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for Ubuntu but not for victimization”. In the final Constitution of 1996, the notion of Ubuntu is encapsulated in the value of human dignity. Out of the values of Ubuntu and human dignity flow the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect.

The primary purpose of a school is to provide an environment where teaching and learning takes place. Part of the learning experience involves an anticipation of the responsibilities of adulthood, including those of citizenship in a democracy. A good citizen is an informed citizen, someone versed in the values and principles of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, the history of South Africa and what it means to exercise democratic freedom with the restraints of personal moral character. The well-rounded South African of the future is someone with a historical consciousness, an open and inquiring mind, is trilingual, and has a healthy respect for the obligation of citizenship (DoE, 2000).

In many countries the pursuit of narrow nationalism has destroyed educational systems, by making schools the instruments of the state ideology and the wishes of political leaders. It is for these reasons that schools are often caricatured as mere instruments of the ideological apparatus of state. Therefore, democracy in South Africa is an effort to increasingly make available the opportunities of the national community to the individual living in their local settings. (DoE, 2000).

#### **3.4.2.6 *An open-society***

The South African Constitution lays the foundation for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people. In an open society every person is afforded the opportunity and right to be a participant rather than an observer of the democratic process. It means being given access to as wide a range of information as possible through as wide a range of media as possible. It also means encouraging a culture of dialogue and debate, a culture of discussion, where values and priorities are perpetually being evaluated and reassessed.

Well-rounded educational development requires the advancement of the intellect and the emotional maturation of the individual. A strong foundation in both prepares children and young adults for the changing demands of modern life. Our schooling system therefore has the responsibility of refining the intellectual development of every learner in an environment that is stimulating and emotionally supportive. It also has the responsibility of providing an approach to solving problems that will be useful throughout the life cycle (DoE; 2000:36).

Learners should be taught to value each other's contribution to discussions in the classroom and be allowed to offer opinions and assistance to each other. Learners should be allowed to share ideas, argue various points and together get clarity on topics they study together. Getting used to participating in positive discussions where views, values and priorities can be reviewed and adjusted when needed, will provide a valuable background for adult participation later in life in an open society. Much more emphasis should be put on the importance and power of debate in advancing the intellectual development of the individual. The ability to ask penetrating questions is a skill that has to be encouraged and developed. To conduct good research on a topic of interest, using library materials, the Internet and personal interviews, is a skill of lifelong value and benefit. The ability to conduct an informed and productive debate adds value to the quality of public understanding and the public discourse, as it does to arrive at a good decision, whether it is in the household, the school, the company, the government, and so on.

#### **3.4.2.7 Accountability (responsibility)**

Through the process of elections, rural comprehensive school voters elect representatives that will represent their interests in all matters of comprehensive education. Voters therefore have the duty to elect those people who can best serve their interests and hold those elected accountable for the decisions and actions taken. SASA makes it clear that public education must be governed by the values and principles of professionalism, efficiency, equity, transparency, representivity and accountability. It further acknowledges the interest of all communities, including rural communities and grants rural comprehensive communities the right to take responsibility for these and to hold educators and elected School Governing Body members accountable for what is happening at the school. "Accountability" therefore requires that all school governing bodies become responsible for the advancement of their nation through education.

The truth of it is that the public perception of rural comprehensive schooling and the degree of dysfunctionality of rural comprehensive schools has not been tested. Systematic research on the problems of education is poorly-developed and resourced field. The resulting generalities and observations are uninformed and counter-productive; damaging criticism places good educators with the bad and effective principals with ineffective ones. Good educators, principals and administrators need affirming to support the ideal of education as vocation and its associated norms and values as a public and national service (DoE: 2000).

Every parent knows that children grow and develop best when they feel secure, are part of a routine and experience a stable social life. Instability is not good for growth. It is important therefore to uphold and insist on structure, and for educators and learners alike to value structure. Punctuality is a sign of respect for one another. Absenteeism without a demonstrably legitimate medical or other reason is a dereliction of duty. The monitoring and scrutiny of homework set regularly are an estimable recognition of the worth of the learner.

Children learn by example, consciously or unconsciously. What parents or educators do is much more important than what they say they do. If educators do not want learners to be absent they must not be absent. If educators expect homework to be completed, they must complete their homework. As the dedicated educator well knows, a relationship of trust and fellowship develops when educators and learners become partners in the vocation of schooling.

Learners must learn that the different members of a group are accountable to the group with regards to the section of work they are responsible for. When learners take responsibility for the learning of their group and for their own individual learning, they understand that each person in the country is responsible to other people. This valuable lesson will prepare learners to become adults who act responsibly towards the society, for their own individual behaviour.

#### **3.4.2.8 The rule of law**

As a state, South Africa is founded on the value of “the supreme of the Constitution and the rule of law”. This means, literally, that the Constitution is supreme, that there is a consensus of rules and regulations we must obey – and that we understand that if we do not, we are breaking the law of the land, and that the state is thus entitled to punish us. Within schools, the rule of law is the guarantor of accountability, for it holds us all to a common code of appropriate behaviour – not just because we know we should, but also because we understand that if we don’t, those to whom we are accountable will discipline us.

The schools should be clear on the rules, responsibilities of learners and consequences for those who transgress. Transparency in our open society requires that learners know up front what the consequences will be if they do not behave and participate as expected. Learners should understand that one is responsible for one’s own behaviour and accountable to educators, parents and peers.

#### **3.4.2.9 Respect**

As a value, “respect” is not explicitly defined in the Constitution, but it is implicit in the way the Bill of Rights governs not just the State’s relationship with citizens, but citizens’ relationships with each other. The essence of respect (as a value) can be deduced from other declarations and conventions supported by the state. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights”.

Reconciliation places specific focus on the valuing of the differences between people with very different cultures and traditions, and with very different experiences of what it means to be South African. Reconciliation is impossible without the acknowledgement and understanding of the complex, difficult but rich history of our country. The conditions of peace, well-being and unity, adhering to a common identity, a common notion of being South African, flow naturally from the value of reconciliation. Reconciliation also requires an active engagement in the “reconstruction of society”, for, as President Mbeki has often said, there can be no reconciliation without transformation. In this way, the value of reconciliation is inextricably woven into the value of equality. (DoE: 2001).

#### **3.4.4 Management skills to ensure effective task execution in a school**

The school development plan goals are achieved by means of effective planning, the setting of aims, and objectives, the implementation of policy, decision-making, delegating, coordinating and monitoring (conceptual skills). The first responsibility of the principal is, therefore, to ensure task execution. An education leader s/he should ensure that subordinates define tasks in accordance with predetermined standards and that the predetermined objectives are achieved according to a set time schedule. With this responsibility in mind, education leaders should use conceptual management skills to execute specific activities and procedures in the six management areas.

#### **3.4.5 Management skills for guiding the actions of people in a school**

In order to achieve the predetermined aims and objectives of a school, education leaders need the support of highly motivated staff, learners and parents. It is, therefore, essential that s/he establishes and maintains, as far as is possible, sound relationships with staff, learners and parents by means of the specific skills, such as leadership, motivation, communication, and facilitation of task teams.

#### **3.4.6 Managing the six management areas in building an effective school**

In the next paragraph the following management areas will be discussed, albeit briefly: curriculum (teaching and learning), human resources, school finance and school administration, physical facilities and school community relationships.

##### **3.4.6.1 Management of the curriculum**

As an instructional rural comprehensive leader the principal must ensure that the activities listed below are performed and that, to this purpose, appropriate resources are available to the entire school. According to Nieuwenhuis and Potvin (2005: 65), a principal who is also a good instructional leader will therefore, provide appropriate help and support to educators and learners, ensure that educators are able to manage classrooms effectively, ensure that educators plan effectively for classroom teaching and learning, support educators to deal effectively with different levels of development in the classroom, ensure that there is continuous assessment of learners’ progress and ensure sustained development of educators.

An educational institution's instructional programme consists of curricular and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum part of the instructional programme could be divided into:

- **An academic programme** - the academic activities of the school, i.e. the various study directions, subject packages, learning areas and courses.
- **The guidance programme** – i.e. guardianship, vocational and physical activities.

As an instructional leader the principal must ensure that these components of the curriculum are well balanced in the school and that each aspect receives due attention. Moreover, in planning the curriculum to be offered, principals and their management teams should also take community needs into consideration.

#### **3.4.6.2 Human resource management**

Schools improve through educator development, which is a lifelong process: educators enter into new phases of their teaching career through promotion and maturing. In a certain sense, they are the most valuable resources at school and should be nurtured and developed. The principal should facilitate the process of appointing staff with the potential to add value to the quality of education offered at the school and to develop the potential of each educator to realize their potential (Niewenhuis & Potvin: 2005; 86 & Buckingham & Coffmann: 1999).

Comprehensive school principals should however, also develop themselves to ensure that they remain at the cutting edge of new developments in education. The Department of Education acknowledges that most principals have made the effort of developing themselves, each in a different way, but the reality is that “not one of them holds a qualification to do the job”. Therefore, the department holds the view that not only each and every principal within the system but also would-be principals should go through an Advanced Certificate in school leadership. The course will provide general management training from the private sector, with some other management, leadership and people skills specific to the field of education. This will become a compulsory course in the future, so that no one will be able to access the post of principal without it (The Star, 2007: January 12). This initiative could assist in the ensuring that principals and schools become more effective.

Niewenhuis and Potvin (2005: 88) also indicate that international best practices and approaches to educator or human resources development include

- Educators working with peers and colleagues to identify opportunities and challenges for each to develop better skills
- Educators working in smaller subject areas to solve common problems

- Educators working with new approaches to assessment in which they are in charge of gathering, interpreting and applying assessment information to specific areas of their practice
- Educators becoming action researchers, identifying through careful observation learner needs and responding in their practice to those needs
- Educators being given two gifts – time and opportunity – to construct their own vision of themselves as reflective practitioners through collaboration with peers and reflecting meaningfully on feedback received through assessment (Sparks and Hirsh: 1997).
- The principal making use of an instructional leadership team to assist him/her with educator development
- Deputy Principals, heads of departments and experienced educators contributing to the improvement of teaching and the development of the abilities of the staff.

### **2.3.6.3 *Motivating staff***

Motivation can be defined as a process in which a subordinate is influenced to achieve the aim that the manager wants him/her to achieve (Van Deventer, I., Kruger A.G., van der Merwer, H.M., Prinsilo, I.J., Steinmann, C.F., 2003: 153). Therefore we may conclude that motivation depends entirely on aim-directed behaviour - i.e. the achievement of aims and the satisfaction of needs.

Through planning and organization, school management determines the school's aims and outcomes. The school principal should be able to get the other education leaders, such as the deputy-principal and heads of departments, as well as the rest of the staff, to work together to achieve these aims. Education leaders in rural comprehensive schools should influence subordinates to achieve the school outcomes and aims by the way in which they motivate, including merit awards, promotions, commendations, recognition and delegation of greater responsibility and authority (Van Deventer, et al: 2003:153). Positive motivation usually encourages the staff to greater achievement because they experience greater job satisfaction.

### **3.4.6.4 *Management of School Finances***

Sufficient school finance and the effective management thereof play a major role in building an effective school. The adoption of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 introduced the principle and practice of partnership in education through school governing bodies that are responsible for various school-based or self-managing activities such as financial management (Kruger: 2003). To ensure that the financial resources are well utilized:

- The financial planning of the school should reflect the vision and mission of the school, i.e. the mission statement of the school should be expressed in monetary terms (Bisschoff, 1997: 65).
- A whole-school development approach should be followed in the drafting of the budget, meaning that everyone who is involved in implementing the budget should also be involved in drawing it up.

- According to SASA, parents must approve the budget at an annual general parents' meeting. If the parent community can identify with the mission statement of the budget parents will be willing to support the school financially.
- Once approved, the budget becomes the basis on which financial decisions in the school are made.
- The budget must be effectively managed, monitored, supervised and controlled so that funds are spend in accordance with the priorities set in the school development plan.

#### **3.4.6.5 Administrative management**

Effective administrative management includes, amongst others by:

- Organizing the school timetable - the instructional programme of the school - in terms of curricular and extracurricular activities. By allocating the correct time and periods, introducing fixed test periods and avoiding unnecessary infringement upon lesson periods, the efficient use of teaching time could be ensured.
- Providing resources and ensuring that they are used equitably and judiciously. Apart from resources provided by the department, the school should also use its own budget to supplement these resources. Here the principal plays a key role in ensuring that there is an effective provisioning system to adequately support the teaching programme.
- Implementing an effective administrative system, bearing in mind that administration is a support function and should promote effectiveness. There should be clear policy directives that spell out what is expected of staff, learners and parents. A good record keeping and filing system are essential for an efficient administrative system.

#### **3.4.6.6 Physical facilities**

The management of the physical facilities of the school could play an important role in building an effective school, on that is accessible and makes entry into and engagement with the education process possible. The architecture of the buildings, and the way in which the buildings, the school grounds and other school assets are maintained also reflect the values that the schools uphold, the same should apply to rural comprehensive schools in that the school climate, and a suggestion that the rights of all learners are respected. The following could be done to ensure that physical facilities do enhance these aspects of teaching and learning:

- Adherence to policy and procedures aimed at ensuring security, maintenance and control of expendable and durable items in the school
- Following procedures that minimize vandalism and loss of equipment and stock
- Cleaning of the buildings and school grounds



### **3.4.6.7 Management of school community relationships**

School-community links are mutually beneficial and the principal should play a leading role in establishing and maintaining such links. The community can support the learning climate of a school in many ways (e.g. providing direction in terms of the mission of the school, recruiting volunteers to help at school functions, assist as class presenters, as mentors and in creating a sense of stability in the community (Niewenhuis and Potvin, 2005). Their ongoing support and involvement are important for educator development and school improvement. This principle of effective parental relationships should be extended to include the establishment of effective school-community relationships. Van Deventer (2003: 255) suggest that the following could be done to improve good school-community relationships:

- Using effective communication to keep parents and the community informed about school activities, aims and objectives, and results achieved
- Ensuring parent and community collaboration and participation by including them in the decision-making process, bringing home a strong message that the school is there for the community
- Demonstrating to parents and the community that the best interests of children are of paramount importance in the school by not harming children
- Emphasizing the importance of partnerships in education.

One of the aspects that will help develop the bond between learner, school and the community is dialogue. Dialogue is part of how an School Governing Body operates as it is tasked with representing the views and needs of the various school stakeholders, most importantly those of parents. A school leader can encourage further dialogue by having events where learners can express their views (debates, conversation sessions) and where educators can speak freely (training sessions, weekly staff meetings, weekend indabas). S/he can, moreover, invite parents to attend open days, cultural events and weekend Indabas.

### **3.4.7 Management**

The underpinning philosophy of the SASA is that schools should become self-managing and self-reliant. In the past, the school principal was expected to run the school by him/herself but, according to Section 16 of SASA, School Management Teams (SMTs), consisting of senior school staff members, must now perform this function. The SMT' are expected to address the day-to-day running of the school as contained in the policies of the Department and the school governing body (Seroto, 2004: 202-203).

For the school to be effective and well managed, the SMT and the school governing body should work together. Legal documents, such as the school Development Policy, HIV/AIDS policy, school governing body constitution, admission policy, language policy, code of conduct for learners and a mission statement for the school should be jointly developed and adequately implemented.



Another area of school management is the area of the appraisal system. Resolution 4 of 1998 gave birth to the Developmental Appraisal System with the aim of enhancing quality education. Resolution 1 of 2003 gave birth to the Performance Measurement System agreed upon in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC). Furthermore, in August 2003, yet another appraisal system came into being, known as the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), aimed at integrating the previous appraisal system. It is heartbreaking to note that since these instruments were developed, the appraisal system has not yet been fully implemented in the Limpopo Province. The absence of an evaluation instrument does not only make managerial work difficult but it also contributes to the lowering of educational standards, especially in rural schools where most of the educators need evaluation and support (Seroto, 2004: 203).

### **3.4.8 Conclusion**

It has been established in this chapter that working towards an effective school is no mean task. It requires an enormous hard work from all stakeholders to transform schools, especially rural schools, into competitive entities. The competence of educational leaders in this regard can, therefore, not be overemphasized.

It has also been established in this chapter that the Constitution of the country, being the supreme law, should form the basis of all policy and serve as a guideline to educators, parents, learners and school governing bodies.

Informed by the values of the Constitution, the researcher has also attempted in this chapter to discuss the role that education and democracy play in the shaping of the kind of national character to which we as a people in a democracy aspire. The moral fibre and value system of our people are constituted and reconstituted in our schools and, by implication, it is up to schools to develop in its constituents the values on which our democracy is being constructed and on which our future depends.

Learners in rural comprehensive schools and urban comprehensive schools should be given an equal opportunity to succeed and advance while at school. In this process the curriculum is crucial, in that it is a key source of learners' knowledge about, and orientation within the social world. Therefore, the post-apartheid curriculum is central to building a new sense of citizenship and possibility (Emerging Voices, 2005:81). However, backlogs in the provision of equal resources, educational infrastructure, class sizes, and the availability of support learning material and other matters of this nature have still not been sufficiently addressed by the government and this is having a negative impact on the education of learners in rural schools in particular. Therefore, the government is again called upon to expedite the process with a view of closing the gaps. The success of schools in the rural areas depends on effective leadership and management.

In some rural comprehensive schools educators enjoy teaching and learners feel secure and enjoy learning. The organizational culture of the school should clearly emphasize the importance of education for each learner as well as its benefits for the country (Van Deventer, et al: 2003).

In chapter 4 an empirical investigation on this research project would be mentioned and to determine the extent to which rural comprehensive schools could address the identified problems.

## CHAPTER 4

### EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in Chapter 1, the general aim of this research project is to determine the extent to which comprehensive schools in the Limpopo province could address identified problems in the rural areas and to determine the perceptions, experiences and expectations of the stakeholders in education regarding selected comprehensive schools. Using data obtained through taped interviews with principals of the selected schools, group interviews with members of School Management Teams, parents serving on School Governing Bodies and members of the Learners Representative Council – all of which were transcribed - and through observations of the school set up, e.g. physical facilities, and the general conduct of the learners and educators. These data are presented and discussed in this chapter.

#### 4.2 METHODOLOGY

According to Berg (2000: 275), the central purpose of methodology section is to explain to readers what the data consist of, and how were data collected, organised and analysed. Informed by Howes' view (2000: 31) that research methodology is chosen to fit with the epistemological demands of the researcher's community and, as indicated in Chapter One, individual interviews were conducted with two headmasters of selected comprehensive schools, one of which is a primary school and the other a high school in a different district. In addition, interviews were conducted with members of the School Management Team of both schools, parent members of School Governing Bodies of the two schools and the Representatives of the Learners' Council of the high school only. The first round of interviews conducted at the primary school, which is situated in the North Eastern part of the Limpopo Province.

#### 4.3 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

##### 4.3.1 Participant and purposive sampling

A sample is a group of individuals who participates in research. The purpose of a sample is to get a manageable group for research purposes. Sampling is used in qualitative research in the selection of interviewees (Krathwohl: 1998).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 432), choosing a site is a negotiation process to obtain freedom of access to a site that is suitable to solve the research problem and feasible for the researcher's

resources of time, mobility and skills. Identifying and negotiating access to the site and to individuals is an important part of the qualitative research design. As regards this study, permission was obtained from the Department of Education and also from the participants to conduct and record interviews.

In view of the purpose of this research, namely; to determine the extent to which comprehensive schools in the Limpopo province would address the problems identified, a sample of two of the six comprehensive schools in the rural areas of the Limpopo province was selected. School A is situated on the eastern side of the province and school B is found on the western side. Both are good examples of comprehensive schools in the province.

### **4.3.2 Interviews**

Wragg (2002: 148 – 150) describes three types of interviews that could be used for research purposes, namely interviews that are:

- Structured – respondents mostly give yes or no answers to carefully structured questions
- Semi-structured – carefully constructed questions in this case give the respondents the opportunity to respond with somewhat longer answers
- Unstructured – need a lot of interpretation from the researcher because it requires in-depth answers from respondents.

#### **4.3.1.1 *Semi-structured interviews***

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to interview principals of the selected schools. According to Wragg (2002: 149), semi-structured interviews are mostly used in the education environment because they give respondents the opportunity of responding more freely to questions. These interviews are guided by carefully planned interview schedules consisting of initial questions that could be followed by probes if needed.

#### **4.3.1.2 *Group interviews***

Group interviews were used to collect data from parent members of School Governing Bodies, School Management Teams and members of the representatives of the high school's Learners' Council. The purpose of the group interviews was to determine the perceptions, experiences and expectations of these stakeholders in education regarding the selected comprehensive schools.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002:287), group interviewing is a useful way of data collection. It brings together people with varied opinions with the further advantage to include the potential for discussion amongst group members, thus yielding a wide range of responses. There are practical and organizational advantages, too. Group interviews are often quicker than individual interviews, are timesaving and involve minimal disruption to the school routine. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:100) add that group

interviews might be useful for gaining an insight into what might be pursued in subsequent individual interviews.

#### 4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

In analyzing the data participants' comments were examined, looking for the most important themes, issues and ideas. In this study, data derived from the individual and focus group interviews were verbatim accounts of what transpired in the audio-recorded interview sessions. The challenge of data analysis is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information. In this study, the analysis of the raw data began with the identification of key themes and patterns from the literature and the raw data (Gough and Scott, 2000: 1). Data were examined in depth, paying attention to the topics and identifying trends and patterns emerging from the content of each discussion as well as similarities and differences across a number of different groups on the topic (Litoselliti, 2003: 91).

The in-depth analysis of the focus group data suggested answers to the following questions:

- Were the objectives achieved?
- What was confirmed and what was challenged by the findings?
- What new ideas emerged (Litoselliti, 2003: 94)?

As already indicated previously, the study was conducted at two comprehensive schools, a primary and a secondary school which for purpose of confidentiality, will be referred to by means of cardinal points instead of names. For the primary school in the North Eastern part of the Province we shall use the name School A. In this school, the principal, School Management Teams, and parent members and the School Governing Body were interviewed. All the research participants are referred to by means of the same cardinal point, e.g. *Principal - school A*.

The secondary school is referred to as school B and is in the northwestern part of the Limpopo Province. In this school, the principal, School Management Team members, parent members of the School Governing Body parent component and Representatives of the Learners' Council were research participants. The two schools are situated far from each other in the deep rural areas of the Limpopo province and were selected on the assumption that they would reflect what was taking place these schools in deep rural areas.

One of the striking features of the selected rural comprehensive schools is that the Department of Education did not furnish them with a guideline to guide their management teams in the management of comprehensive institutions. Consequently the management of these rural comprehensive schools differed

from one to the other. The principals of these rural comprehensive schools were also unhappy about the fact that the curriculum was designed and prescribed by the department.

## **4.5 PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

### **4.5.1 Principal' profiles**

Principals of the two schools, i.e. of School A and School B are both males aged 43 and 56 respectively. Both are in possession of matriculation certificates, professional certificates and a basic degree and they have 24 and 26 years teaching experience respectively. Both indicated that they were in good health.

### **4.5.2 School Management Team (SMT) profiles**

Members of the School Management Teams interviewed were two females from School A and one male from School B. In school B it was discovered that the School Management Team consisted of the principal and one Head of Department does exist. Two additional posts, i.e. one for the deputy principal and one for an additional Head of Department were allocated to the school but had not yet been filled or advertised by the Department of Education. The ages of the three School Management Team members range between 40 and 52. They are all in possession of matriculation, professional certificates and additional diplomas obtained from universities and they have 23, 24 and 27 years teaching experience respectively.

### **4.5.3 Learners' Representative Council Profile**

Representatives of the Learners' Council members were derived from school B, since the other school is a primary school and is not entitled to have such a structure. Three learners, two males and a female participated in this study. The learners were in Grade 10, 11 and 12 respectively. Two of them were 18 years old and the other 19. Their positions in the organisation are those of president, deputy president and an additional member.

## **4.6 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW DATA**

Individual interviews were conducted with the two principals of the two schools separately.

Starting with the principal of school A, the researcher asked him for an overview of his experiences, expectations and perceptions of the success of comprehensive schools in the rural areas of the Limpopo province. In his response the principal of school A indicated that the rural comprehensive school project has been long awaited for by the parents and that there were clear indications that parents supported the rural comprehensive project, as evidenced by their sending their children to his school from far away villages. Many parents seem to be benefiting from this project in the sense that, instead of sending their children to far away schools, they get what they want locally. Economically, too, this is advantageous because tuition fees are low and reasonable. Children from poor families can still afford to pay the fees.

The department of education thought it wise to establish these types of rural comprehensive schools in rural communities. In the principal's own words, "It is our wish that these schools should become centres of learning, a place where learners could learn everything. We wish to see these comprehensive schools becoming supportive institutions, supportive in the sense that neighbouring schools should emulate or copy from these centres of excellence and implement what they copied at their respective schools with a view of bringing about positive changes."

He continued by saying that, "Furthermore, the department of education should supply these schools with teaching aids, better qualified educators and various sports fields must be developed. If these schools could be well developed and equipped with necessary facilities they could be much more marketable. In addition, each district should be provided with both comprehensive primary and secondary schools so that learners could continue with the same curriculum. Presently, due to lack continuity in comprehensive school education levels in this area, parents will have to run around looking for a better school where their children could be admitted, with the hope that they will continue with the same curriculum and this is not available." According to the principal, this "situation frustrates quite a number of parents. The department of education should consider introducing senior phase or Grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 in comprehensive primary schools. The same could be applied to a comprehensive secondary school where a comprehensive primary school is not available in the immediate vicinity as a feeder.

The response of the principal of school B, the Secondary School, to the same questions, though somehow negative, did not differ much from that of school A, the Primary School.

In his response he indicated that, "definitely these types of schools are very much needed. They can change the environment of a child. The only drawback with our school is that special rooms like language laboratory, computer centre, the library, music room and the technical drawing room are not functional since they are not supplied with the necessary materials. Learners cannot develop their talents in the music room. The library is empty and learners cannot widen their horizons by reading a variety of books since these sources are not available in the library. The library building is just but a white elephant, for it cannot bring wisdom to our learners. The department of education should not just pay lip – service to these structures, instead should come up with a full support to make this a success. We are convinced that if the department could support these structures their future will be bright."

This principal (of School B) indicated that they observed with interest how learners coming from the deep rural environment who are admitted to this school automatically change their attitudes in order to suit the environment of this institution. They experienced that some of the learners were very unruly and uncooperative given their rural background and mentality. However, they have since adapted to the situation and are now behaving well.

According to this principal these types of schools could improve the quality of learning in rural communities, and he would therefore urge the Department of Education to pay particular attention to improving and supporting such institutions since “a conducive school environment motivates learners towards learning”. Since sports should form an integral part of the core-curriculum in these institutions, these schools, according to him should be seen as leading sporting activities hence the imperative to develop various sports fields, like a soccer field, netball court, tennis court and many others. Ensuring that this happens could help “prepare our learners towards participating at international Olympic Games. It would be of great importance if the department could take a deep look at this initiative.”

## **4.7 GROUP INTERVIEWS**

The researcher used group interviews in collecting data on the perceptions, experiences, expectations and perceived effect of curriculum delivery on the performance and achievement of the learners of various stakeholder bodies at the two comprehensive schools selected for this research. Interviews were conducted with the participants of each school separately and the findings are presented in the form of summative responses representing the different foci and stakeholder categories.

### **4.7.1 Interview with SMT members at School A (Primary)**

#### **4.7.1.1 *Comprehensive School Vision***

The researcher reminded the focus group that in 1996 the Limpopo Provincial Government had a vision of establishing six comprehensive schools in the areas to enhance the standard of education in academic, technical as well as artistic field of study in the rural communities and asked them whether or not they thought that this vision or dream had been realized.

Respondents indicated that, although the government vision relating to the establishment of comprehensive schools was good, the vision had not been fully accomplished: there were some gaps that still had to be filled. One member indicated that the department of education at the outset did not provide the management of these schools with a blueprint or a guideline indicating what was expected of them in order to take the process forward. Consequently they had to visit some of the former Model “C” schools to see how they administered their things. These visits assisted them in starting the process in the new schools. Staff members also visited the Model “C” schools in the neighbouring town to familiarize themselves with the teaching in various grades. According to the SMT members at this school, the department still had to provide the blue print and pay regular visits to these schools in order to give them the necessary support - in the form of teaching aids and human resources. In this fashion most probably the dream would be realized.



#### **4.7.1.2 Functions of Comprehensive School**

When asked for their perceptions and experiences of differences between comprehensive and public school functions in the same area, respondents indicated that learners attending comprehensive schools were exposed to a variety of learning areas in the intermediate (grades 4 - 6) and senior phase (Grade 7). These include: a vernacular language, English, Afrikaans, Mathematics, Technology, Natural Science, Economics and Management Science, Arts & Culture, Music, Needlework and Clothing, Media Science, Computer Literacy and Life Orientation.

Respondents indicated that this was a good thing because learners would be unable to widen their horizons and to make better career choices whilst in senior phase if they were not exposed to a variety of learning areas at an early stage. Public schools, according to respondents, did not offer all these learning areas: they did not, for example, offer Music, Needlework and Clothing, Media Science and Computer Literacy although Music is offered as an extra-curricular activity at some public schools.

Examples of interview questions are as follows:

The SMT members:

What are your perceptions and experience about how your school / comprehensive school, compared with the public schools in the same area ?

The Principal:

Give me an overview of the experience, expectations and perceptions of the success of rural comprehensive schools.

SGB parent members

Why do you think that parents would like / prefer to send their children to comprehensive school?

LRC members:

Give me examples of specific skills and competencies which your follow learners do or can display after having been registered in this institution.

#### **4.7.1.3 Curriculum delivery**

When asked which problems they experienced in their mission to realize successful curriculum delivery, respondents indicated that, as regards learners:

- There was a major problem with *punctuality*: Learners always arrived late for school because they came from far, with the furthest point being about 35 kilometers away. Their transport also arrived late at times.

- Another member of the School Management Team cited *homework* as an area of major concern, indicating that a number of learners were not staying with their parents who could assist them with or monitor their homework. Their parents often worked far from home and the learners consequently stayed with their grandparents who could often neither read nor write and could, therefore, not assist the children with their homework.
- Both members of the School Management Team indicated that *absenteeism* was also a major problem. Learners did not come to school daily, claiming that they had to help with household chores such as looking after the cattle, and fetching water from the wells or rivulets. These tasks took up much of their time and they could not do household chores early in the morning and still prepare themselves to come to school.

With regard to educators, both members of the School Management Team indicated problems relating to educators not coming to class on time, especially after breaks because they continued chatting to one another in the staffroom even when it was time to go to class and teach. The SMT indicated that they were monitoring the situation very closely. They made a point, for example, of moving around after breaks, checking whether or not teachers were engaged in teaching. So, in doing this, the situation is now under control. They also checked learners' progress books, their reports, educator's workbooks and lesson plans and the general atmosphere of each classroom once a week.

Respondents indicated that they had implemented a development programme, designed by the management team and ratified by the staff, that includes monthly tests and assessments and use the results as yardstick to determine whether or not the work is being done or not. Finally, during the monthly staff meetings, educators must report on the written outputs given during that month as compared to bare minima agreed upon per learning area. An indication of the success of this program is the fact that neighbouring schools come to them requesting question papers for tests and examinations at their schools although the papers were meant for learners of this school and that all these teachers look at the quality of the work on the question papers and express appreciation of the good standard being maintained.

With regard to parents they cited few problems. They both agreed that parents were very supportive except for those working far away from home because they could not attend parents meetings and lacked first hand information about the progress of the school. Also grandparents could not assist the learners or come to parents meetings due to old age, ill health and the major problem is that they may not understand what the discussions is all about. Respondents indicated that two general parents meetings are scheduled per

annum, where issues of budget, general discipline, school security, and transport problems are discussed. These meetings typically contribute to positive developments in the school.

With regard to the Department of Education, respondents indicated that they received limited learning support materials and learner textbooks, though late at times. The department organized workshops on the New Curriculum Statement. Even financially, through Norms and Standards, the Department enables the school to buy photocopiers and stationery such as duplicating paper, ink cartridges, master rolls, etc. with parents supplementing this with school fees, by paying R100 – 00 per month per child for 11 months a year. This money is used for the general maintenance of the school like toilet repairs, paintings, plumbing, salaries for the support staff that are not on the departmental payroll, additional teaching aids, teacher development workshops, etc. Generally, the money is utilized to equip the centre, and also for the purchases of cleaning chemicals, paying of electricity and water bills, though the funding from the Department from the is very little, this is being supplementation by the school fees by parents towards the development of the school.

#### **4.7.1.4 Nation-building**

When asked what their perceptions and experience were on how learners in rural comprehensive schools were equipped to face the challenges of South Africa and the global market, respondents indicated that they were of the opinion that learners were ready to face the challenges but would need to continue with education of the same standard. Learners in Grade 1 at this school differed from learners in higher grades at other schools in that they were able to better express themselves in English than learners at other schools and could also express themselves in their mother tongue. They also indicated that they usually get positive reports on those who leave the school after Grade 7. Another interesting piece of information shared by the respondents was that the University of Venda had adopted their school and was assisting their learners with reading skills, particularly English and Tshivenda.

#### **4.7.1.5 Learner competence**

When asked to provide examples of specific skills and competencies which learners display after having enrolled at the comprehensive school, many of the respondents indicated that learners are capable of expressing themselves in English. At times the local radio talk show asked learners to participate in discussions on a topic of interest and in most instances learners bring back good prizes. Furthermore, some learners can write poems on their own, about interesting things in the community and the environment. They also acquire the skill of playing piano, they can read with interest and understanding, they develop confidence and can express their opinions freely.

#### **4.7.1.6 Success stories**

When asked for examples of success stories at the school, respondents indicated that the school participated in many activities of educational value organized by the department of education or by the

private sector, for example Mathematics and Science Olympiads and they bring back bronze medals and certificates. They always win at circuit, district and provincial levels as is evidenced by the diplomas and trophies displayed in the administration office and the principal's office. "With stage dramas and Masifunde Sonke competitions, they always obtained position one at the district level and at provincial level they always win some money and a floating trophy in music competitions." Respondents added that the annual cultural competitions have enabled their school to win different types of traditional attires and higher prizes in terms of monies.

#### **4.7.1.7 Sustainability expectations**

When asked what their future expectations were regarding the sustainability of comprehensive schools in this province, respondents emphasized that since their school catered for learners from different ethnic groups - such as Sothos, Vendas, Shangaans, Indians and Zulus - they would love to see the department appointing educators of different ethnic groups. Moreover, the department should increase the quota allocated to the school so that financial support could be given to those learners coming from the families with poor financial backgrounds.

Respondents also argued that the department should try to increase the number of comprehensive schools in other areas of Venda so that children would not have to travel such long distances. Allied tot his was their fear that learners who graduated from their school would be exposed to a different kind of curriculum at the local high school, one in which the curriculum they started at primary school would no longer have any significant bearing on their future lives. It was, therefore, imperative that the government should erect a comprehensive high school nearby in order to preserve curriculum continuity.

Another burning issue relating to the development of comprehensive schools was that of staffing. According to respondents the school does not have enough manpower and "many learners come to these institutions". Respondents added that many departmental meetings were organized in this school, with three to four different meetings often taking place concurrently. Since these groups need different venues, respondents recommended that the department should build more classrooms and appoint three more support staff members to help with the maintenance of the buildings and the surroundings of the school since the school currently had only two maintenance staff members and one cleaner, which is "totally inadequate for an institution of this magnitude". If the department could add more buildings and additional teaching staff, the school can accommodate more learners." Should the department take heed of these recommendations, according to them, the neighbouring communities would have a brighter future, brought about by the sustainability of these schools.

#### 4.7.2 Interview with SMT member of school B (Secondary)

Unfortunately, school B had only one School Management Team member who participated in this study. The school was allocated an additional post of deputy principal and an HOD during the current academic year, and as a result the posts have not yet been advertised or filled.

##### 4.7.2.1 Comprehensive Rural School Vision

When asked whether or not they thought that the 1996 vision or dream of the Limpopo Provincial Government, namely to establish six comprehensive schools in the areas to enhance the standard of education in academic, technical as well as artistic field of study in the rural communities has been realized, he responded that the schools were not living up to the expectations. The vision/dream had not been realized because, for example, they were not offering technical subjects as expected or as they wanted to. He added:

*“Our school is situated in the mining industry and we should be offering technical field subjects or learning areas. Should also have other areas of specialization. We were not allowed to introduce the technical field of study but were asked to continue with science stream, hospitality and commercial streams. We cater learners from Grade 8 up to Grade 12. In Grade 8 – 9 learners are doing all 9 learning areas, namely: Vernacular (Setswana); English; Mathematics; Life Orientation; Natural Science; Human and Social Sciences; Economics and Management Sciences; Travel and Tourism and Arts and Culture. From Grade 10 onwards learners have to choose the stream that suits him or her best. There are three streams that have been designed by the department, namely the Commercial, Science and Hospitality streams” (see Figure 4.1).*

<b>Commercial Stream</b>	<b>Science Stream</b>	<b>Hospitality Stream</b>
<i>Vernacular (Setswana)</i>	<i>Vernacular</i>	<i>(Setswana)Vernacular (Setswana)</i>
<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>
<i>Accounting</i>	<i>Physical Science</i>	<i>Mathematical Literacy</i>
<i>Economics</i>	<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>Geography</i>
<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>Life Sciences</i>	<i>Travel &amp; Tourism</i>
<i>Life Orientation</i>	<i>Life Orientation</i>	<i>Life Orientation</i>

Figure 4.1

He also explained that from Grade 10 onwards the learning areas were reduced to 6 in number, and learners could start building a future from these streams. Even so he indicated that the school would not be satisfied if learning areas relating to technical field of study, like technical drawing, etc. were not introduced.

#### **4.7.2.2 Functions of Comprehensive School**

When asked about his perception and experience of a comprehensive school's functions compared with public schools in the same area, the respondent indicated that there was not much difference from what the other schools were offering.

*“The schools are just the same. There is nothing special about the school. Most of the learning areas offered by the public schools are also offered by this comprehensive school. Perhaps the difference is that learners in Grades 8 to 9 are offered a variety of subject choices and by the time they reach Grade 10, they shall have been exposed to different types of learning areas.”*

#### **4.7.2.3 Curriculum delivery**

When asked which problems he experienced in his mission to realize successful curriculum delivery with regard to learners, educators, parents and departmental support, the respondent indicated that there were many problems with regard to learners. Firstly, there was a lot of absenteeism and there were also learners who did not come to classes regularly. There was much abuse of liquor amongst the learners and smoking of dagga was another major problem: the majority was just smoking ordinary tobacco.

He also added, “Most of our girls do suffer from teenage pregnancy whereas they have already one or two children. Since our learners do come from various areas, some do come from informal settlements and RDP houses. Most of their parents migrated from the farms. These places are far away from school and learners use transport coming to school. The transport was paid for by the department (subsidy) and the number of learners increased and the transport (Kombi) was not increased. This also constituted a major problem because punctuality is not observed”.

With regard to educators, they did not experience problems, with educators trying to work very hard. According to the respondent they had no problems with absenteeism and “there is always sobriety amongst the educators. However, there is a general concern from the educators, which is that they are very much overloaded with work”.

The school has the staff complement of 18 educators, with 560 learners on the roll. Two posts were added to the staff list during this academic year, but have not yet filled. Therefore the teacher/learner ratio is 1:37 whereas the departmental recommendation for teacher/ learner ratios is 1:35.

With regard to parents, the respondent was very disappointed because parents did not give the necessary support. A vivid example was cited which depicted a situation or scenario that took place during 2006. The school had to postpone the School Governing Body elections twice because of poor attendance. The third time only 45 parents turned up and the elections were conducted. This was a clear indication that the

parents do not care much about school activities or the education of their children. Perhaps parents need time to be educated and coached about the importance of the education of their children. From the look of things parents did not see any valid reason for taking part in school activities. This has affected some learners who do not show any commitment towards their work.

With regard to the department, the respondent indicated that they do get a support in the form of learner support materials, stationery and textbooks. They do not get support from the department with regard to staffing. Presently, the school still has five educators being paid by the School Governing Body. With the meager funds collected as school fees contributions, the school is able to pay their salaries. Every learner was expected to pay R100 – 00 per month towards school fees, but the contributions did not come forth and this was reduced to R50–00 per month, which relates to R600–00 per child, per year. The Department supports the school through allocations from Norms and Standards. These funds are utilized for maintenance and payments of major bills, repairs and the purchases of photocopy machines and duplicating paper. The one administrative staff member is also paid by the Department, as are the two support staff members.

#### **4.7.2.4 Nation-building**

When asked about his perceptions and experience of the way learners in comprehensive schools are equipped to face the challenges of the South African and the global market, the respondent indicated that the manner in which their learners are being prepared at school would not enable them to enroll in the ordinary tertiary institutions, because the majority of the staff is not satisfied with the subjects (learning areas) offered at the school. He insisted that since the area comprise of mining's subjects that were offered at school could be preparing learners to take employment in the mining industry. Presently, they are not convinced that these learners could play a meaningful role in the global market, or take up the challenges that are there.

#### **4.7.2.5 Learner competence**

When asked to give examples of specific skills and competencies which learners already display after having registered at your school, the respondent indicated that there is not much to make a mention of such competencies except that in the past two years they have had learners who passed Grade 12 with a B symbol in Mathematics and the majority performed outstandingly. There are different competitions held within the district amongst the schools, and his comprehensive school does take part. Usually, learners would bring back marvelous awards such as trophies and diplomas in music competitions and athletics meetings. The school also takes part in Mathematics and Science Olympiads.

#### **4.7.2.6 Success stories**

When asked to give me examples of the success stories of his school, the respondent indicated that not much could be said about the success stories of the school except that there are learners that participate in



activities that are not organized by the school or by the department of education, and they have done very well. One of the learners had just recently been elected the Limpopo provincial volley-ball leader, and had been to many places, including Cape Town.

#### **4.7.2.7 Sustainability expectations**

When asked about his future expectations regarding the sustainability of comprehensive schools in the Limpopo province, the respondent indicated that the department had a good idea when establishing such schools in the rural communities, but reiterated the idea of introducing learning areas that would have a bearing on the future careers of learners. He feels strongly that the relevant learning areas should prepare learners for future employment especially since the school received immense support from local mining. Also educators of these comprehensive schools would need to meet quite often and have some common discussions about the problems they encounter as well as sharing the successes.

*“Perhaps in that way they could together try to map out the future of these unique structures. The department of education should try to give the necessary support and pay regular visits to such schools with a view of giving guidance and directive. In that way, hopefully, these schools would become much better. More of the schools should spread throughout the province, particularly in the deep rural areas to the disadvantaged communities. Otherwise the future of these schools is very much impressive.”*

### **4.7.3 Interview with learner representative council members.**

#### **4.7.3.1 Comprehensive school experience**

When asked how they experienced being learners of this comprehensive school and how long they had been LRC members, respondents indicated that that it was a privilege to be in the institution and that they felt good to be there. The three of them were elected into the council for the first time this year. Ever since they became members of the council they learnt a lot in terms of leadership skills and on discharging some of the responsibilities.

#### **4.7.3.2 Comparison to public schools**

When asked about their perceptions of their school as compared to public schools in the neighbourhood, they indicated that their school was better off than the nearby public schools, since the school had better facilities and the outlook of the school was attractive.

#### **4.7.3.3 Problems with learning activities**

When asked which problems they experienced in their learning activities, one of the members expressed some disappointment about the number of weeks that passed by without learning some learning areas due to the fact that there was no educator. The absence of the computer educator added another bitter pill, because learners are very interested in acquiring computer skills. Both members expressed some

disappointment about the malfunctioning of their library center: they could not access books because there were no sources in the library.

#### **4.7.3.4 Success stories**

When asked about successes that the school had had in the past three years, respondents indicated that the school had registered a remarkable success with the matriculation results since 2004. In 2004, 64 wrote and 37% passed; in 2005, 74 wrote and 83% passed; in 2006, 69 wrote and 66% passed.

#### **4.7.3.5 Learner competence**

When asked for examples of specific skills and competencies which their fellow learners already displayed as a result of being registered in this institution, respondents indicated that there were a number of competitions organized by circuit and private companies like Telkom in which they took part. In some instances they obtained first position, bringing back trophies and diplomas. If they did not perform well it was only when they obtained a third position in that event. However, they admitted that they were still on a learning curve and most probably would bring back better results the next year.

#### **4.7.3.6 LRC role in school development**

When asked what role they played as LRC members in the development of the school, they indicated that members of the LRC had been given the enormous task or responsibility of keeping order within the school. They were able to settle some disputes with their fellow learners and encouraged working together amongst the learners. Secondly, they indicated that it was their ambition to see the school functioning like those schools in towns, having modern science equipment, functional computer laboratories, a public address system in the hall for functions and an auditorium. The school should also have some sporting facilities. They indicated that they were busy with fundraising in order to meet some of the challenges indicated.

#### **4.7.3.7 School pride**

When asked whether or not they were proud to be associated with the school, both respondents indicated with one voice that they loved their school very much and that they were happy to be associated with the school and, furthermore, that they would do everything in their power to uplift the standard of the school.

### **4.7 4 Interviews with the parent members of the School Governing Body**

Both school A and B were represented by a male and a female. Two members from each school participated in this study. Both could read and write and the interviews were conducted in English, starting with School Governing Body member of school A.

#### **4.7.4.1 Experience of being an School Governing Body member**

When asked how they experienced being a School Governing Body member, how long they had been on the School Governing Body and what they thought led to their nomination to the School Governing Body, participants responded that they feel duty bound to serve their own community and as a result they do not

have any problem serving on the School Governing Body. They were elected for the first time during the previous year (2006) when elections were conducted. Parents elected them into these positions because they have confidence in them and possibly would represent them well in the school.

#### **4.7.4.2 Comprehensive school development**

When asked about their perceptions and experiences of the development of comprehensive schools, they responded that parents would like to see their schools operating in a better and more effective way.

*“Comprehensive schools in this area are a new venture which we would like to see flourishing and not to fail our communities. It is the wish of the parents that these comprehensive schools should bring new innovations and remarkable skills to our learners in this challenging world. Unlike in the past, in today’s world learners should bring about new innovations and skills to the communities. We do hope and believe that these schools shall bring about better developments and would help in the creation of employment in the near future.”*

#### **4.7.4.3 Effective School Governing Body membership**

When asked what, in their opinion, made an effective School Governing Body member, the participants indicated that members of the School Governing Body are in charge of the governance of the school. They are the “watch dogs” of the community in school matters. Therefore, they “must be knowledgeable and have a sense of humor when dealing with sensitive issues. They need to understand the legislative framework in which they supposed to implement and to understand the stipulations of the South African Schools Act. In essence they must understand the role they suppose to play within the school setting”.

#### **4.7.7.4 Relationship problems**

When asked which problems they experienced in their mission and quest to realize successful relationships amongst learners, educators, School Governing Body members and Departmental support, participants indicated that some learners came to school late and some do not pay school fees regularly. However, the matter was gradually being addressed at parents meetings and there are no ugly scenes reported by the school as regard the conduct of learners.

The participants commended the educators’ behaviour, “even though there are sometimes minor problems relating to some educators’ work, but in general they do their work and this is being revealed by the work recorded in the learners’ progress books. Parents are invited once a term to school, to come and peruse learners’ books and have some discussions with learners’ parents about their progress. In this way there is mutual relationship that is developing between the parents and educators”.

With regard to School Governing Body members, there is a good working relationship with the school. School Governing Body meetings are scheduled to take place once per quarter to discuss the progress of

the school. All members honour the invitations and make meaningful contributions to the development of the school to put it in the limelight. Some members of the School Governing Body volunteer to do minor repairs at school, like repairing windowpanes and desks. “This shows total commitment on the part of the governors.”

Participants indicated that although they do enjoy support from the department, at times they feel frustrated when doing “all in their powers towards the development of the school, but no incentive or remuneration of some kind is coming forth”. They take note of the support from the department in the form of textbooks and stationery for learners, but they feel neglected. One of the members mentioned that they spend a lot of time at school but are not recognized for the work done.

#### **4.7.4.5 Parental preference**

When asked why they thought parents preferred to send their children to a comprehensive school, participants indicated that parents in the first place are attracted for by the infrastructure. “Discipline at these schools is very much under strict supervision.” Furthermore, parents are attracted by the various learning areas, like computer studies, offered in this institution from a very early stage. “Therefore, parents are convinced that by bringing their children at the comprehensive school, they will acquire many skills.”

#### **4.7.4.6 Educator appointment**

When asked which criteria they applied in appointing educators and what qualities or characteristics they would like to see in the educators they interviewed, the participants indicated that they understood that there is a procedure that must be followed in the appointment of educators and that there are guidelines/resolutions available to direct the filling of vacant posts. Firstly, the post must be advertised; then shortlisting must take place, conducted by the panel and finally interviews must be conducted. Members of the panel would always try to give the school the best. A candidate’s qualifications and C.V. would be carefully scrutinized and interrogated, until the panel was convinced that the right person had been found. The most important aspect was the manner in which the candidate responded to questions.

#### **4.7.4.7 Sustainability and development expectations**

When asked what their future expectations were regarding the sustainability and development of comprehensive schools in their district, participants agreed that the department of education had come up with a very good project that needs to be developed and nurtured. According to them it was the responsibility of the department, together with the communities, to see to it that these structures are further developed and maintained.

*“There should be more of these structures in rural communities. They proved to be useful, since learners do show confidence and encouragement towards their learning activities.”*

Participants also indicated that it would be “of paramount importance” if the department could develop the sport fields such as netball and volleyball courts. Learners should participate in a variety of sporting codes. The department must be commended for establishing such unique structures.

#### **4.7.5 Interviews with parent members of School Governing Body at School B (Secondary School)**

As with school A, school B had two members of the School Governing Body, both a male and a female that participated in this study.

##### **4.7.5.1 Experience as SGB member**

When asked how they experienced being a School Governing Body member, how long they had been on the School Governing Body and what they thought had led to their nomination as a School Governing Body member, one of the respondents indicated that:

*“it was quite an interesting experience because we are trying to bring the school and parents to work together. So it is developing that spirit of teamwork between the stakeholders. One is exposed to a number of things whereby one is involved with stakeholders”.*

All the participants indicated that they had been involved in School Governing Body matters for two years, and that parents had nominated them to serve on the School Governing Body.

##### **4.7.5.2 Comprehensive school development**

When asked about their perceptions and experiences regarding the development of comprehensive schools, respondents indicated that the development of comprehensive schools was “quite a good idea” but that, although they were convinced that the schools would operate well when they started, these expectations were not fulfilled.

*“There is a shortage of resources and manpower. We were expecting that quality education would be offered in these schools by highly qualified educators. Specialization should be taking place in these schools. For instance we should be having a librarian paid by the department looking after the library building.”*

##### **4.7.5.3 Effective SGB membership**

When asked what, in their opinion, made an effective School Governing Body member, one of the respondents indicated that such a person should be a good leader, must be able to communicate effectively with the stakeholders, and must be able to attend meetings about School Governing Body matters.

#### **4.7.5.4 Successful relationships**

When asked which problems they experienced in their mission and quest to realize successful relationships amongst learners, educators, parents, School Governing Body members and departmental support staff, they indicated that, with regard to learners:

*“we have realized that most of them have single parent and as a result discipline is poor. They don’t do their school work as expected, they are not regular at school and most of the time we learnt that they spend a lot of time in the local taverns, and they do not respect their educators”.*

With regard to educators the sense was that they loved to do their work and were a “dedicated team” that was trying hard to do their work very well even though they found it difficult to implement the new methodology, “since the Department does not give them enough training”.

With regard to parents, the SGB members indicated that they were still struggling to make parents aware that the school belongs to them.

*“They do not attend meetings in large numbers. Our meetings are scheduled once per quarter but still they do not attend. There is no support from the parents. In these meetings the discussions surround about the learners progress, school finances, uniform and the general discipline of the school. The level of the literacy amongst the parents is still very low, and the majority is unemployed.”*

Respondents also indicated that they experienced a lack of support from School Governing Body members. They indicated that the majority would attend the first two meetings and thereafter no longer attended, providing “invalid reasons or excuses. Therefore, it becomes very hard for the School Governing Body to can accomplish their mission”.

With regard to departmental support, respondents indicated that the department supplied the school with policies, textbooks for learners and stationery hence, it was supportive on a small scale. Also, some educators are being paid by the department, while some, who are offering key subjects (learning areas) like Mathematics, were appointed on a temporary basis with no future guarantees.

#### **4.7.5.5 Parental preference**

When asked why, according to them, parents preferred sending their children to comprehensive schools participants indicated that when this school started, many parents had to send their children to this school. According to them, it was “unfortunate” that the first matric results were poor. “But thereafter, the results did improve in the sense that quite a number of parents had to send their children to this school”.

#### **4.7.5.6 Educator appointments**

When asked about the criteria they applied in appointing educators, and what qualities or characteristics they would like to see in the educators they interviewed, respondents indicated that their qualifications and CVs were scrutinized and that they appointed educators who were dedicated to their work and who displayed knowledge of the subject being advertised. They also indicated that educators had to be “disciplined”.

#### **4.7.5.7 Sustainability and development**

What are your future expectations about the sustainability and development of comprehensive schools in your district?

The respondents indicated that in future, they expected the department of education to make the comprehensive schools better in terms of resources and other learning materials. According to them, the comprehensive schools should not operate like public schools. “There should be difference in terms of outputs. There should be permanent staff remunerated by the state and not by the School Governing Body, “ and special learning areas like Media Science, Computer Literacy, Technical Drawing, etc had to receive “due attention”. There was a clear sense that the SGB members held the Department of Education responsible for the development of sports field like soccer fields, tennis courts, cricket fields etc. because, they claimed, “by so doing, these schools shall match the international educational standard”.

### **4.8 OBSERVATIONS OF SCHOOL A (PRIMARY)**

#### **4.8.1 General discipline**

Generally, discipline at school was good. Learners observe punctuality during breaks and in the morning when starting with morning assembly. Also in the classroom the learners cooperate with their educators. They perform tasks assigned to them and timeously submit the completed tasks or classwork to the educator for marking. Learners are always in neat uniform.

#### **4.8.2 Utilization of facilities**

The utilization of facilities like the science room, computer laboratory, and music room follows a different pattern. For instance, when it is time for science, learners will quietly move out of their general classroom to the science laboratory or music room where their educator is waiting for them. They will be guided to perform experiments or play music by means of instruments available there up until the period is over. There is no pushing or making of noise on the corridors as they move to these laboratories and back to their classrooms. The apparatus and the instruments are handled with great care.



### **4.8.3 General maintenance of the buildings and grounds**

The school buildings are well maintained by the two handymen, who are in charge of plumbing and carpentry. Leaking taps and falling gutters are always repaired. There are rubbish bins posted at the entrance of every classroom whereby learners are made to throw litter and the grounds are always clean. Orange peels and scraps of papers are always picked up by the learners immediately after breaks under supervision of their educators for duration of five minutes.

The school yard is well fenced with mesh wire and there are a lot of shade and ornamental trees, variety of flowers and a lawn. Clear direction signs are displayed on the ground.

### **4.8.4 School climate and culture**

A healthy atmosphere prevails within the school. There is no movement of learners outside the classroom during lesson delivery except on exceptional cases where a learner has requested permission to visit the rest rooms. Restrooms are always very clean and neat and always kept tidy by the two female cleaners. Learners are urged to refrain from using foul language and there are rules and regulations displayed in every classroom. Learners are not permitted to use cell phones within the school premises. No stealing of other learners' belongings is permitted and during play time learners should not hurt one another. Lost and found properties are reported and handed to the administration office for further handling.

### **4.8.5 Trained personnel and pupil teacher: ratio**

The school has 478 learners with 12 educators. 10 Educators are on the departmental payroll and 2 are remunerated by the School Governing Body. All these educators are well qualified, being in possession of a matriculation certificate, a teachers' diploma and 4 have already obtained a basic degree. The organogram of the school includes 1 principal, 2 HOD's and 9 educators. The pupil teacher ration is 1:39. All these learners are accommodated in the classrooms. The school has 22 general classrooms.

### **4.8.6 Learner achievements**

According to the school schedules of 2005 and 2006 respectively, there are learners in Grade 7 who are performing outstandingly. Their achievements are quite impressive and this shows that they will do very well in Grade 12. It has been reported that two learners were able to score an award during 2005, by Shoprite/Checkers and are being paid for their fees up to matric.

### **4.8.7 Comprehensivation of the school**

The school is able to admit learners of different abilities without administering a diagnostic or aptitude test. Admissions are done on a first come first serve basis irrespective of colour and culture. As already indicated in the preceding paragraph, there is variety of learning areas offered by the school. These learning areas are tailor made to suit the individual needs of the learners according to their learning capabilities. The entry point is Grade R or reception, and this is where the majority of learners are admitted.

Admissions in some other Grades are not usual except on some special circumstances, depending on the availability of the vacancy in that Grade. The constitution of the School Governing Body is very clear on admissions policy. Learners can be able to make a brighter future if could be properly guided on which career to follow after having done these learning areas.

## **4.9 OBSERVATION OF SCHOOL B (SECONDARY)**

### **4.9.1 General discipline**

From the look of things it would appear that the maintenance of the discipline in this institution is not sufficient. Learners would be moving around during lesson times. Some do not put on their school uniform. When educators are not in class, there would be a loud noise, which indicates that there is no commitment on the part of the learners.

Educators seem to be less concerned about the welfare of the learners or are reluctant to reprimand them. Teachers also take time to go to classes after breaks. The main gate of the school is always wide open and learners get an access of going out at any time. There are no security personnel at the gate. The school does not start with morning devotions hence punctuality is not observed by the learners.

### **4.9.2 Utilization of school facilities**

The school is well built with various facilities such as an administration block, music room, computer centre, science laboratory, library room, language laboratory, and flush toilets. It was a great shame to realize that the toilets for both boys and girls are not well looked after. Foul language is used in the walls of the toilets and some are not working properly. The music room, technical drawing room, and the library are not functional, although the rooms are still in good conditions.

The science laboratory, with very little apparatus, is used by learners and the educator. The computer laboratory is equipped with computers; about 23 computers donated by the local mine has no qualified educator to teach the learners computers. However, the room is kept tidy and the doors could lock properly.

### **4.9.3 Maintenance of the buildings and grounds**

The outlook of the building is still intact. They look very beautiful. They are being maintained by 3 handy men. Windowpanes and ceiling are still intact but the surroundings were not up to standard. Scraps of papers were lying all over the school ground. Learners are not committed to keeping the school surroundings clean and tidy. It is the responsibility of the handy men to keep the place clean and tidy. Within the schoolyard are a lot of indigenous trees that are not very well looked after. Scanty flowers are seen here and there. Sports grounds are not well looked after.

There are no direction signs or warning signs within the school, except in the administration block where notices are displayed. There are no rubbish bins to throw litter. As a result the school environment is not very healthy. The lights in the hall are not functioning properly. If the school could have general maintenance it could retain its original culture.

#### **4.9.4 The school climate and culture**

The school is situated in a very secluded area near primary school in a semi bush place, where the environment is very much conducive for learning. Unfortunately, as it has been observed, the inhabitants of this institution are not committed to make the school a haven for learners. Otherwise educators have the will and are eager to make things happen, but it would appear there is no support from the management side. As a result both learners and the educators do take an advantage of the situation and not take their work seriously. There should be a total commitment in all spheres within this institution in order to make it a success. Both the management and the School Governing body should take initiatives of making things happen.

#### **4.9.5 Teaching personnel and learner teacher ratio**

The school has a staff compliment of 18. All these educators have matric and a teachers' diploma. The principal has a basic degree and a teachers' diploma. The post establishment for 2007 is 20 educators, with one principal, deputy principal and two HOD's. However, at the time of conducting this study, two posts i.e. HOD and deputy principal were still not yet filled.

There are 784 learners on the roll, and the current pupil teacher ratio is 1: 43, 5 and for secondary schools, the department recommends a ratio of 1: 35. Out of the total number of 18 educators, 11 are paid by the department and the School Governing Body is also remunerating additional 7 educators

#### **4.9.6 Learner achievements**

There are no track records indicating outstanding learner achievements, except that in 2005 the matric results were very good, 48 learners were able to pass matric with symbol B in Mathematics. Learners are eager to work much better than what they did, but can only achieve this if commitments and dedication is shown to each one. The other grades are also doing better as observed from quarterly mark schedules.

#### **4.9.7 Comprehensivation of the school**

The department established this school in this area with a view of assisting the rural community of the area. The school has modern physical facilities and has also caused the department a fortune. Utmost care must be taken at all costs to make the school attractive and to maintain good standard. The learning areas as designed can make the learners to be more competent and have a brighter future. In other words they would be employable.

Looking at the available facilities, the school looks like a technikon campus with various facilities. It is therefore, the responsibility of the stakeholders to take care of these facilities.

#### **4.10 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

The researcher analyzed the minutes of the staff, school governing body, school management teams and that of the parents meetings. The researcher requested minute books and records of matters related to whole school evaluation and development, also the general timetable for educators and the following were found:

- Both schools did produce staff minute books, schools governing body minute files and the general time table for educators and thereafter only one school (Primary) was able to produce parent meetings minute book and records of the whole school evaluation and development
- The minute books for the School Management Teams, staffs and the School Governing Bodies do indicate that meetings are held quarterly discussing matters of interest, relating to school development.
- At the primary school the whole school evaluation report reveals challenges that still need to be attended to by both the staff and the school management team. It poses a number of challenges that warrant teamwork such as educator development, phase planning, etc
- Educators' period time table for both schools were well attended to and there are no loopholes such as "free periods"
- Parents' minute book indicates that quite a number of issues pertaining to learners code of conduct, payment of school fees, learners progress books does receive much attention.
- The School Governing Body minute book for the primary school indicates that meetings are planned quarterly, but for matters that require urgent attention, an emergency meeting is called. For the secondary school governing body meetings are held periodically but members of school governing body do not attend all these meetings as expected.

#### **4.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has focused on opinions of the stakeholders, the perceptions, experiences and expectations of the role players in education regarding the success of comprehensive schools in the rural areas. At the outset it is pointed out by both stakeholders that the government had a good vision of establishing these projects in the rural communities.

The idea was to bring about better facilities and positive development in the rural communities whom have been long neglected. However, it points out that the government did not undertake a thorough research as to how these structures are to be managed and provide guidelines towards the running and the development of such structures.

Schools are as much an aspect of rural development as they are symbol of development. This calls for the support from the government agencies such as the regular inspection by education officials which would likely help improve the management of schools. In a year, District Manager, school evaluation teams, curriculum specialists and subjects advisors should visit the schools at least once per quarter. The circuit managers and learning area specialists should visit the schools once per month. These visits would help alleviate some teaching problems expressed by the stakeholders in this study.

The curriculum offered in these schools places great expectations on both parents and educators to seed democratic values in society through democracy and social justice in the classroom. However most educators are ill-trained and ill-equipped to meet these extraordinary high expectations.

They are also stymied in their work by inadequate resources and support. Democratic classrooms are central to the building of democratic societies. They require curricular and teaching methods that promote and acknowledge autonomy, recognition and critical thinking.

The school governing bodies need to understand the role they should play in the governance of these institutions. The government should see to it that both stakeholders have the same vision in order to take the process forward in a very positive manner. Finally should both the stakeholders understand the role to be played in the development of these structures, we are convinced that these structures would be a great success.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study an attempt was made to give an exposition about the current educational perspective in the rural communities and the impact of comprehensive education in rural communities of the Limpopo province. This chapter includes the aim and objectives of the study, literature review, research methods and results. The findings of the study, its limitations and recommendations are also discussed.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY OF THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general aim of this research is to determine to what extent comprehensive schools in Limpopo province endeavour to address identified problems in the rural areas. To attain the general aim of this research, the following objectives of the research are to be taken into account:

- To study the reasons for the development of the comprehensive schools in the rural communities and the purpose of comprehensive schools in other provinces of South Africa and other countries of the world.
- To identify the characteristics of successful and effective schools and determine the management competencies which are necessary for principals to manage their schools effectively and efficiently.
- To determine the perceptions, experiences and expectations of the stakeholders in education regarding the selected comprehensive schools. These objectives were achieved through research in the form of literature review followed by empirical study and documents analysis of the research results.

A literature review and empirical research, followed by an analysis of the results were undertaken to achieve the aim and objectives of the research.

This dissertation of limited scope comprises of five chapters. These chapters include the following:

Chapter one: It gives an orientation to the study and includes an introduction, the rationale and problem statement, research aim and objectives, relevance of the study, the demarcation as well as a summary of data collection methods which will be used. It also includes how data will be analysed, the ethical consideration of the study and its limitations.

Chapter two: It examine by means of literature study problems experienced by public schools in the rural areas and the purpose of comprehensive schools in other provinces of South Africa and other countries of the world.

Chapter three: Deals with the characteristics of successful and effective schools and to determine the management competencies which are necessary for principals to manage their schools effectively and efficiently.

Chapter four: Consist of an analysis of the research findings about the perceptions, experiences and expectations of the stakeholders in education regarding the selected comprehensive schools. Summaries of the interviews and findings are briefly being discussed.

Chapter five: Consists of the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

## **5.3 IMPORTANT FINDINGS**

The findings of the literature survey and the empirical study will be concisely expounded in this sub-section.

### **5.3.1 Findings from the literature review**

After an intensive literature survey concerning the success of comprehensive schools in rural communities, several findings come to light. They are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

#### ***5.3.1.1 The establishment of comprehensive schools in the rural areas of the Limpopo province***

According to Hartshorne (1992: 111) most people in the rural areas are where they are and what they are because of state policies in which they had little or no say; and because of fundamental economic and political structures that govern their lives, their opportunities for employment, the social conditions and which they live, their lack of political power to change things, and the kind of education which is available to them.

The rural areas of each province have different demographics, geographies, economies and cultures that shape the lives of rural people in fundamentally different ways. Therefore, improving the quality of rural schooling is a complex project, and the primary responsibility rests with government. (Ministerial Committee Report: 2005: 11). The Limpopo Provincial Government in its quest to address the education problems in cooperation with the Limpopo Department of Education, in 1996 undertook a vigorous initiative of establishing six comprehensive schools one in each of the six districts in the province, in the most underprivileged communities.



The primary aim of establishing these schools was to have schools that have vibrant facilities conducive for learning. Such schools were to become centres of development. They would have facilities for developing technical, academic as well as artistic field of study. Furthermore, they are aimed at developing and the creation of good quality education in the rural communities, which could offer a better curriculum aimed at redressing the past imbalances. The introduction of these schools would further bring about improvement to rural education with a view to minimize exodus of learners to urban schools (cf: 1:1).

### **5.3.1.2 Comprehensive schools: The European perception.**

Contrary to the traditional schools, organised in vertical categories, Henkens indicated that the so – called comprehensive schools brought together all branches in one school.

Italy began the implementation of comprehensive middle schools in 1962. In Sweden, the common Grundskola existed as an experiment since 1949 and was generalized in 1962. In 1969 the Education Ministers of the German Lander decided to start an experiment in comprehensive schooling. In England and Wales, the Labour government in 1966 adopted the comprehensive structure, which had existed alongside grammar, technical and secondary modern schools since the 1944 Education Act. In 1969 the Belgian government introduced a structure called Reformed Secondary Education.

Comprehensive schools established in the early years of reform, were to give learners better guidance, improved teaching and testing methods, etc. (cf: 2. 6. 7). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the traditional education system in some of the European countries came under pressure. (e.g. Belgium). The main objective was that it did not respond to the current, social and economic needs and expectations. Especially, in the decade after the Second World War, manifesting a deficiency of skilled workers and growth of social demands, educational innovation obtained its place on political agendas. Therefore, in Belgium the introduction of comprehensive schools was seen as a preparation “for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (cf: 2. 6. 7).

From the above study it has been learnt that, initially, comprehensive schools were accepted by some of the European countries, such as Belgium and Germany. The comprehensive schools were established as an alternative to the existing schools, because, they realized that these schools could bring about some changes in the education system as compared to grammar schools. But, the concept of comprehensive schools was highly political, in the sense that political parties that come into existence had a much say on the education system of the country like in England and Wales, the labour party was in favour of the comprehensive system. The same applied to Belgium, but during the both country, it was a turning point for the comprehensive schools. In general, comprehensive schools and very well in these countries. Like in South Africa, the existing comprehensive schools in the rural areas are doing very well, except for the fact that a full support from the department is needed.

### **5.3.1.3 Characteristics of effective schools**

Despite the hazards of evaluating school effectiveness, there are a number of characteristics shared by all effective schools (Levine, 1992: 30; Harber, 1999: 14).

The leadership role of the principal; productive school climate and culture; it is crucial for schools to be well – managed institutions; focus on learner acquisition of key skills; schools need to concentrate more of their endeavor on teaching itself while at the same time promoting empathetic learner care and learning – centered approaches in the classroom; monitoring of learner progress; effective schools are orderly at all times; on-site staff development to ensure a happy, efficient staff is of key importance; the quality of the staff is of key importance; keeping parents informed and involved; effective instructional organization and teaching; high expectations and requirements of learners; other characteristics such as, learner pride in achievements, sensitivity to multiple cultures and instruction and personal development of learners and learners should expect and receive professional standards from educators at all times through proper use of classroom teaching time.

### **5.3.1.4 Leadership and management**

The difference between leadership and management is that leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration, while management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done, working effectively with people. A school principal has to be both leader and manager. Effective leaders are proactive and see help that is needed. They also nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Furthermore, school effectiveness is related to collegial, collaborative interactions among the key actors in the school (cf: 3. 3. 1)

### **5.3.1.5 Leadership**

Farley (2002: 393) indicates, like talent for music and art, talent for leadership involves much knowledge and disciplined practice. Leadership is a social transaction in which one person influences the other. People in authority do not necessarily exert leadership. Rather, effective people in administrative positions combine authority and leadership. Rather, effective people in authoritative positions combine authority and leadership to assist an organization to achieve its goals.

Day and Harris, (National College for School Leadership) indicate that leadership is essentially the process of building and maintaining a sense of vision, culture and interpersonal relationships, whereas management is defined as the co-ordination, support and monitoring of organizational activities. Therefore they maintain that leadership is about having vision and articulating, ordering priorities, getting others to go with you, constantly reviewing what you are doing and holding on to things you value. Management is about the functions, procedures and systems by which you realize the vision.

### **5.3.1.6 Characteristics of effective school leaders**

Studies undertaken in the UK by Day et al, (2000) on the performance of 12 successful principals identified common threads that resonate with the South African situation. What is apparent from this UK study is that good school leadership leads to a good school. . It was found that the 12 chosen head teachers were very resilient under changing and stressful conditions and did not “give up”. They were also very ethical in their approach to the work situation. Day et al (2000) suggested that there are six core characteristics of effective school leaders, as follows: Leadership means having a clear personal vision of what you want to achieve; good leaders are in the thick of things, working alongside their colleagues; leadership means respecting teachers’ autonomy protecting them from extraneous demands; good leaders look ahead, anticipate change and prepare people for it, so that it doesn’t surprise or disempower them; good leaders are pragmatic, they are able to grasp the realities of the political and economic context and they are able to negotiate and compromise and good leaders are informed by and communicate, clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purpose for the school.

### **5.3.1.7 The management task of education leaders**

Any education leader has two major management responsibilities. The first responsibility therefore focuses on task execution by means the achievement of predetermined aims and objectives by means of effective planning, the setting of aims and objectives, the implementation of policy, decision-making, delegating, coordinating and control. The second responsibility is the establishment of sound interpersonal relationships with all partners in education by means of effective leadership skills, motivation, communication and the skills to form effective teams at the school.

### **5.3.1.8 The external management environment**

It is not possible to lead and manage people and school activities in a vacuum. The South African school leaders and managers must always take into account the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Bill of Rights and the supreme law in South Africa. Schools must also be managed according to the national, provincial legislation related to education and departmental policy.

The Constitution is underpinned by values such as: social justice, (e.g. protection against abuse and ridicule from others) equality, (no unfair discrimination and respecting the rights of others in the group), non-racism and non-sexism (ensuring all learners are accepted and equally valued for their contributions, guarding against type casting in roles and tasks), respecting human dignity (showing respect and kindness towards each other in the school and in classrooms), building an open society (allowing all learners participation in activities, access to books, websites and having transparent goals), accountability and responsibility (being accountable to learners, parents, educators for the task done and as individual being responsible for own behaviour) and a spirit of peace, tolerance and respect for the rule of law.

The management areas South African schools namely, the curriculum areas (teaching and learning), human resources, school finance and school administration, physical facilities and school community relationships should be lead and managed in terms of the abovementioned values and legislation.

#### **5.3.1.9 Management of the curriculum**

As an instructional leader the principal must ensure that the activities listed below are performed and that appropriate resources needed in the teaching-learning situation are available to the entire school so that these could be done. Activities of a good leader will include (Nieuwenhuis and Potvin: 2005): Provide appropriate help and support to educators and learners; ensure effective classroom management; ensure effective classroom planning; support educators to deal effectively with diversity in the classroom; implement continuous assessment of learners' progress; ensure sustained development of educators. An educational institution's instructional programme consists of curricular and extracurricular activities.

#### **5.3.1.10 Human resource management\**

Schools improve through educator development, which is a life – a long process as educator enters into new phases of their teaching career through promotion and maturing. In a certain sense, they are the most valuable resource of the school that should be nurtured and developed. The principal should facilitate the process of appointing staff with the potential to add value to the quality of education offered at the school and develop the potential of each educator to realize their potential (Niewenhuis and Potvin; 2005; Buckingham and Coffmann; 1999).

#### **5.3.1.11 Management of school finances**

The adoption of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 introduced the principle and practice of partnership in education through school governing bodies with school-based or self-managing responsibilities, including financial management responsibilities, which gives schools greater responsibility for financial matters (Kruger, 2003; 236-243). The following guidelines should be followed to ensure that the financial resources are well utilized: The financial planning of the school should reflect the vision and mission of the school. According to Bisschoff (1997: 65) a budget is the mission statement of the school expressed in monetary terms; whole-school development approach should be followed to draft a budget, which means that everyone who is involved in implementing the budget should also be involved in drawing it up; the budget must be effectively managed, monitored, supervised and controlled so that funds are spend in accordance with the priorities set in the school development plan.

#### **5.3.1.12 Management of school – community relationships**

School community links are a mutually beneficial relationship in which the principal should play a leading role. The community can support the learning climate of a school in many ways. Their ongoing support and involvement are important for educator development and school improvement. Therefore, the principal could use effective communication to keep parents and the community informed about the activities, aims and

objectives, and results achieved. Ensure parent and community collaboration and participation by including them in the decision-making process. This will bring home a strong message that the school is there for the community.

### **5.3.1.13 Administrative management**

Administration is a support function and should promote effectiveness. Clear policy should exist, spelling out what is expected from staff, learners and parents. A good record keeping and filing system are essential for an efficient administrative system

### **5.3.1.14 Physical facilities**

The management of the physical facilities of the school could play an important role in building an effective school that is accessible and will make it possible for entry and engagement in the education process. The architecture of the buildings the way in which the buildings, the school grounds and other school assets are maintained also reflects the values that the schools uphold, the school climate of a school, and the rights of all learners that are respected.

## **5.4 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

### **5.4.1 Individual interviews with the principals**

Principals of the two schools contend that the government thought it wise, by developing comprehensive schools in the rural communities, with a view of bringing about quality education to the disadvantaged communities. An important factor is that both schools have modern physical facilities that could make learning much easier and pleasant. There is a clear indication that parents do support the project, evidenced by their sending their children to the schools. Children are coming from far away villages to this learning centre. Many parents seem to be benefiting from this project in the sense that instead of sending their children to far away schools, they get what they wanted locally. Economically, is quite good because tuition fee is low and reasonable. It was further indicated that they observed with interest how learners coming from the deep rural environment who are admitted in the comprehensive schools have automatically changed their attitudes in order to suit the environment of the institutions. They experienced that some of the learners were very much unruly and not co- operative with the background of rural mentality. However, they have since adapted to the situation and are now behaving well.

According to the principal of school B (the secondary school) the only drawback at their school is that special rooms like the language laboratory, computer centre, the library, music room and the technical drawing room are not functional since they are not supplied with the necessary materials. Learners cannot develop their talents in the music room. The library is empty and learners cannot widen their horizons by reading a variety of books since these sources are not available in the library. The library building is just but a white elephant, for it cannot bring wisdom to our learners.

The department of education should not just pay lip – service to these structures, instead should come up with a full support to make this a success. The principals are convinced that if the department could support these comprehensive schools with the necessary resources their future will be bright. These schools should be seen to be leading in the sporting activities. Various sports fields must be developed, like soccer fields, netball courts, tennis courts and many others. Sports should form an integral part of the core-curriculum in these institutions.

#### **5.4.2 Experience and perceptions of members of the school management teams.**

Both members of school A and B do agree that the provincial government had a good vision of establishing these schools but the vision has not been fully accomplished. They argue that the Department of Education must still provide the schools with the guidelines how to manage a comprehensive school and should pay regular visits to these schools in order to give the necessary support in the form of teaching aids and human resources. Staff members had to visit neighbouring former “Model C” schools to familiarize themselves with school administration and the teaching in various grades.

The views of school B (Secondary) are rather different when coming to the usage of various facilities. He argues that the Department of Education does not give the necessary support in terms of the library, computer studies, technical drawing and language laboratory. In essence these rooms are not fully utilised to the maximum benefit of the learners since they are not provided with the necessary equipment.

#### **5.4.3 Perceptions and experiences about functionality of comprehensive schools as compared to public schools.**

Members of the school management teams differed in their views on this subject. Members of school A (primary) did indicate that learners from these schools differ in character and approach. They are exposed to a variety of learning areas at an early stage (intermediate phase) whereby they do have an ample opportunity of making a career choice at an early stage.

On the other hand member of school B (secondary) disagrees to this notion that, learning areas offered at his school does not differ from those being offered by the neighbouring public schools. The respondent from the secondary school took the point of view that the comprehensive schools are not living up to the expectations. The vision or that dream has not been realized. For an example, their school is not offering technical subjects as expected or as needed. Their school is situated in the mining industry and should therefore be offering technical field subjects or learning areas. However, all members of the SMT do agree that learners’ behaviour do change when admitted to these schools. The primary school indicated that the school offers learning areas that are not offered at a public school, like, Media Science, Computer Studies, Music, etc.

#### **5.4.4 Specific skills and competencies displayed by learners of these schools**

Both members of the SMT of the two schools agree that learners do develop confidence and acquired some specific skills in these schools. Learners from school B (secondary) did indicate that they have acquired leadership skills since they were given an opportunity to lead and give support to their fellow learners. From school A (primary) it has been indicated that learners have developed confidence and can express their opinions freely. Quite often are engaged in debates at a local radio talk shows on matters of interest e.g. topics relating to moral regeneration and they always bring home good prizes for themselves and for the school.

#### **5.4.5 Awards for the school**

Members of the SMT for both schools and the representatives of the learners' council for the secondary school agreed that, the schools do participate in competitions organised by the department of education and the external organisations like Telkom, Eskom and Sasol. The two schools agreed that they normally bring home bronze medals, trophies and diplomas.

#### **5.4.6 Expectations about the sustainability of these schools**

The primary school put emphasis on the government to support these schools in terms of human resource, teaching aids and financial support. Also to expand these type of schools in the rural areas. The same applies to the secondary, which indicates that the schools are good and can still do much better if can be supported. They emphasised that schools could be marketable and could become centres of excellence. Members of the school governing bodies of both schools are also in full support of these structures and do indicate that parents are very much supportive towards the development of these schools. Members of the representative of learners council added that they are proud to be associated with these type of schools but there should be some improvements in respect of sports fields and other field of study.

#### **5.4.7 Observations of school A (primary)**

Discipline at school A (primary) was very good. Thorough planning and organization does prevail in this institution. Educators, learners and the members of the governing body are organised and can set up their own goals. The school ground is well organised with ornamental trees, flowers and rockeries. Classrooms are clean and tidy, with attractive teaching aids displayed on the walls. There are no broken windowpanes and broken door handles. There is no movement of learners during lesson delivery. Educators are always with the learners in the classrooms.

#### **5.4.8 Observations of school B (secondary)**

The school is situated in a very secluded place in the outskirts of the village surrounded by indigenous trees. The physical facilities look very good and attractive. The surroundings are fenced with a mesh wire but inside the classrooms there are a number of broken desks and chairs. The classrooms are not that



attractive and very few teaching aids are displayed on the walls. Educators are always in the classrooms but learners are always outside the classrooms. The flowering garden is not that attractive and ornamental: there are few trees except the indigenous trees. However, the yard looks clean but without any decorative devices such as rockeries.

The computer laboratory is equipped with about 23 computers donated by the local mine but has no qualified educator to teach the learners computer literacy or science.

It was a great shame to realize that the toilets for both boys and girls are not well looked after. Foul language is used in the walls of the toilets and some are not working properly. Learners are not committed to keep the school surroundings clean and tidy. There are no rubbish bins to throw litter in. As a result the school environment is not very healthy. The lights in the hall are not functioning properly. If the school could have general maintenance it could retain its original culture.

#### **5.4.9 Important documental findings**

Analysis of records for whole school development: Records of reports of meeting of staffs, departmental circulars on school development were perused. Minute books for both staff and school governing body were checked. At the primary school these records were all available and minutes were kept very well. For the secondary school minute books are kept but it would appear that meetings are not held regularly i.e. once per quarter as directed by the South African Schools Act. At the primary school the whole school evaluation report gives the reader the direction in which the school is taking and also the challenges that still need to be addressed. The secondary school does not have whole school evaluation records and it was impossible to determine the direction in which the school wants to take, and the challenges faced with. However, both schools did display general timetables for educators in the staff rooms, and also the time registers.

### **5.5 CONCLUSION**

Improvements could be brought about by rural comprehensive schools through government's vision to redress the imbalances created by the past legacy, and unfortunately, the people whom have been put in the forefront, who must lead this process, are unable to take the process forward. Hence, various stakeholders do raise a number of concerns about the guidelines or blue print to guide them as to how to manage these projects. In some instances stakeholders interviewed do agree that the government is failing in its duty to support these structures.

Education officials in provincial and district offices are important in giving these schools, principals and educators back – up support when they need it. Since 1994, new structures and officials have been set in place to assist schools and educators in realizing the goals of the new education system. In education, ten years of democracy has meant a major overhaul of the apartheid education system. Budgeting processes

are no longer based on race and curricula no longer reflect the values of a white minority. Major gains include improved access, as reflected in enrolment figures, accelerated provisioning of school infrastructure, more equitable distribution of resources, improved learner - educator ratios, the introduction of school nutrition programme and the establishment of democratic structures in the form of school governing body at local school level.

The poverty of education in rural areas is integrally linked to inadequate employment, infrastructure, nutrition and health, exercise and entertainment of the rural poor and vulnerable groups in rural areas. These are the conditions that need to be resolved if the right to education guaranteed in the Constitution is to be enjoyed.

Meeting the basic learning needs of rural people in the rural areas of the Limpopo province is clearly a major challenge to achieving “Education for all”. The provision of education in rural areas further requires and merits far more attention, effort and resources than it presently receives. These sentiments are shared by Professor Jonathan Jansen in an open letter addressed to the Minister of Education in 2004, Naledi Pandor, when he mentions that:

*.....[s]econd, stay focused on the schools that need you. Most Black children will not be accommodated within these few elite schools – your energies and resources be deployed where it matters, in the rural and under – resourced schools (City Press 2004 [e]: 16)*

The statement above clearly reflects an understandable concern that the government needs to deal with the many problems associated with and are the main causes of rural neglect. Basic education must be offered on an equitable basis so that all learners in the rural communities have a fair opportunity to obtain a viable education and be able to continue learning throughout their entire lifetime.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although the Limpopo Provincial Government in its quest to address the rural comprehensive education problems in cooperation with the Limpopo Department of Education has been addressed by the establishment six comprehensive schools, one in each of the six districts in the province, the following should be done to strengthen the comprehensive schools in their quest to become beacons of hope in the rural areas:

- The highest priority should be given to train and develop the members of the senior management teams of these schools in leadership and management skills. The Department of Education should ensure the empowerment of all the principals and senior management staff at every school.

- Provide these schools with qualified educators to ensure that the comprehensive curriculum is taught effectively and that the physical facilities are fully utilized.
- Curriculum advisors should support educators at the schools to ensure effective teaching and learning.
- The Department of Education should support the schools to cater for the needs of local industries.
- Principals, senior staff members, educators, parents and learners should accept the responsibility and the accountability not only to maintain a high standard of teaching and learning in the comprehensive schools but also to ensure a high standard of ethical behaviour in the schools.
- Promoting community ownership of basic education programmes helps ensure their relevance, sustainability and effectiveness both in terms of learning achievement and of contributing to other rural development objectives. In this case the government has a role to play in balancing individual's rights and community responsibility and to guard against possible domination and discrimination at local levels.
- The government needs to put in place recruitment strategies to make teaching in rural areas attractive. Educators teaching in rural areas should be encouraged to improve their qualifications.
- Government should give urgent attention to the implementation of the recommendations of the Review Committee about rural education to ensure equal access, equal opportunities and equal treatment for all learners.
- The involvement of private sector, as an important potential partner needs to be encouraged, for example, through tax incentives or other inducements, to join in developing non – formal basic education opportunities in rural areas.

## **5.7 FUTURE RESEARCH**

In view of the limited scope of this study, a more in – depth study should provide more insight into the topic.

The following aspects of the study need further investigation:

- A large scale investigation to determine the specific leadership and management needs of rural schools.
- Problems experienced by public schools, school effectiveness and management competencies necessary for principals to manage the schools effectively and efficiently.

## **5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The research was limited to only two of the six comprehensive schools in the rural areas of the Limpopo province. The research further focused primarily on the perceptions, experiences and expectations of the two principals concerned, members of the senior management team, parent members of the governing bodies and three members of the Learners Representative Council of the secondary school. Another possible limitation could be the fact that the researcher is also a principal of one of the comprehensive schools in the Limpopo province which could have a negative influence on the respondents.

## **5.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The vision or dream to improve the quality of education in the rural areas of the Limpopo Province could be realized and could bring hope for the future of the neglected communities in the rural areas. Well built and well maintained school buildings and other facilities and a comprehensive curriculum are only the starting point to realize this dream. All actions and activities revolve around people, namely the staff, learners and parents with the support of the department of education. The only way to ensure the realization of this vision is to start with the empowerment of the people. Principals and senior management must be trained and develop to manage these schools effectively. Educators must be developed by well managed staff development programmes and they must realize that if they want to earn the respect of the learners and parents they must render a high quality service and that their conduct should reflect a professional and exemplary lifestyle. Learners must be motivated to adhere to the code of conduct of their school, to attend school regularly, to do their assigned home work and to understand that the school has been developed for the use of all learners attending the school and that it is the privilege and obligation of every learner to protect and carefully use the facilities and equipment so that others that come after them can also enjoy the privilege. The parent community must be encouraged to support the school and their own children. Lastly this wonderful dream will only realized with the full support of the department of education.

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