

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FOUR (4) SCHOOLS IN THE
LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (SEKHUKHUNE AND
CAPRICORN DISTRICTS) IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND
SERVICE DELIVERY**

BY

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Declaration

I Sussan Malima, Student Number 9035394 declare that

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to make a comparative analysis of four (4) schools in two Districts (Sekhukhune and Capricorn) in order to understand service delivery as expressed in good or poor performance of schools in the Limpopo Province. The schools that were used as research sites are Tshebela, Mosego, Lephanye and Setlakalana Secondary Schools. Respondents were District Directors, Circuit Managers, School Principals, School Management Team Members and Learners who were sampled randomly from the target population. Ethical considerations were not bypassed as formal approvals were available.

The study focused primarily on ascertaining the reasons for the varying performances of schools that are located within the same circuits and districts. In addition, the study aimed at investigating how the different role-players contributed to the success and or failure of the schools. Objectives that are within the context of Systems Thinking are highlighted in order to use them as the bottom - line in the schooling framework. International and local literature addressing issues around the objectives were used to contextualize the area of investigation.

A mixed methods approach of research was used to strengthen data collection. Questionnaires were designed for different categories of respondents to relate their experiences and roles in promoting or defeating principles of good performance. Interviews with select individuals and with Focus Groups, together with direct observation was undertaken at a place and time convenient to the respondents. All responses were written down on the questionnaires. The response rate and a synopsis of the responses is outlined in accordance with the themes while the results analysis is congruent with the objectives of the study. The analysis of the results reflected that there was a positive relationship between the identified themes, their categories and sub – categories with either good or poor performance in some schools while the opposite was true in other schools. Recommendations for future research, learning and adopting best strategies were made.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

The intention of this study is to compare and analyse the varying performance of four schools in Education Districts in the Province. There are a number of perceptions around why schools under perform while others are performing well. The research investigated what different researches have linked or associated with poor or good performance of schools looking at some of the following factors that could be internal or external to the school:-

- Good / poor School Principals and School Managements Teams
- Good / poor teachers in a school
- Sufficient / insufficient infrastructure
- Availability / non – availability of Learner & Teacher Support Materials

In essence, the chapter presents how the research was undertaken, problem statement, motivation and objectives of the research.

1.2 Research Problem

The performance of the Education system has been an issue of concern for many years around the world. South Africa has been blaming the poor performance for the apartheid system where Education was delivered differently for different groupings of people. Different research processes world-wide researched on education delivery from a systems thinking approach.

That began to clarify different contexts within which schools perform given the policy environment. The level of complexity within which the systems of education operates is also high hence; it is further complicated by a plethora of stakeholders that are involved. The problem is the varying performance outcomes of schools while schools are all guided by the same legislation, a product of democracy which was introduced to govern and manage schools.

1.3 Background of the Study

The study must be understood within the context in which the school operates because that shows the different angles from which orders are imposed to the school and how it must be governed. Figure 1.1 is a representation of the different yet important role – players that the schools interacts with which are National & Provincial Officials; Teacher or Labour Unions, Governing bodies, Communities etc. but they are not visible at a time of the study.

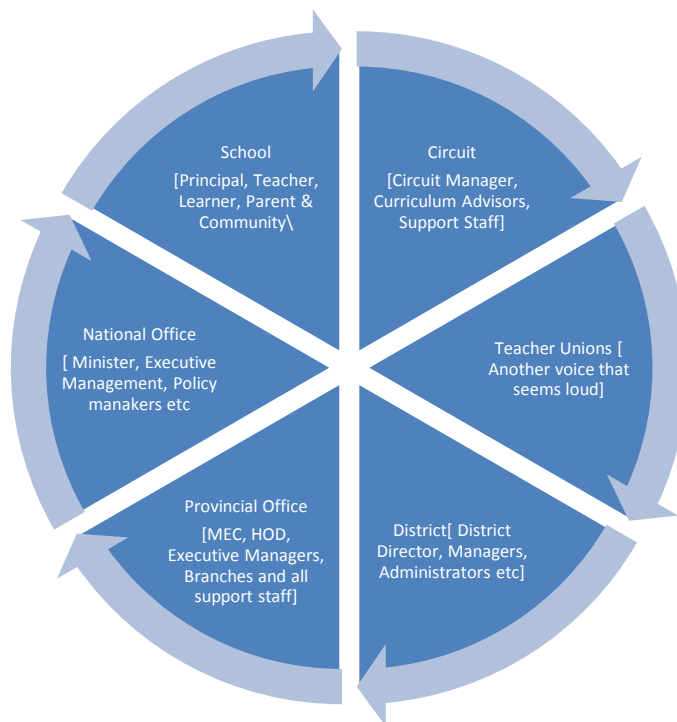


Fig 1.1 Illustration of the education role - players in Limpopo: Created by Sussan Malima

The point of focus in the system was learner performance hence the research process aimed at understanding factors associated with such performance because of the number of role players not just the learner alone without understanding the performance of the teacher, the school management team, circuit management, district and provincial management teams.

Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, and Diaz (2004) stated that the debate on strengthening accountability as part of the reform effort was done by developing accountability systems by many states by combining positive incentives and sanctions to schools to improve student achievement.

1.4 Motivation of the Study

The motivating factor for this study was that government seems to be investing a lot of money in the Education system however, there is reported under – performance of schools evident by the poor quality of matric results. It seemed relevant to do the study to understand the causal factors to food or poor performance form the role – players. Previous studies have pointed out a number of possible causal factors ranging from resources; school management and leadership, governance; socio, political and economic backgrounds etc. however, most comparisons did not focus on cases of similar environments.

The presence of teachers in class, on time teaching has not been explored. Given the geographical locations of these schools, it becomes easy to understand the possibility of having human situations that could be explored. Throughout the education system, there are humans involved in the delivery of the desired output which is “quality education”. It would also be necessary to establish possible synergies between inputs, throughput and the output. Understanding the varying performance of schools in order to recommend possible change in how things are done is a motivating factor for the study.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The reason for the study is to understand service delivery within the context of the schooling system. The labelling of schools as functional or dysfunctional is used across the education department in the country guided by the threshold given by the national department of basic education. With the understanding of the constituencies involved in education, it would be important to explore the role of each constituent member and how they contribute to the high performance and low performance of the schools being studied.

The following research objectives were considered for this research process:-

- **Objective One**

To ascertain if the National Department of Education through its Provincial Limpopo Education achieved its mandate of applying relevant policies in managing the provision of quality basic education in those two circuits and four schools.

- **Objective Two**

To understand the views of critical role players in the school environment that makes the school either functional or dysfunctional.

- **Objective Three**

To understand the challenges that confront the Provincial, District, Circuit and School management teams in enhancing performance.

- **Objective Four**

To identify and understand external factors that threatens teachers and learners in producing good results.

- **Objective Five**

To determine what could be done to assist poor or under – performing schools to shift to a better category of performance and maintain good performance.

- **Objective Six**

To identify and understand critical success stories from good performing schools that could be replicated anywhere in the system.

The research process was aimed at searching and understanding substances that played a role in either delivery or non – delivery of services in the context of the school especially because of the number of role – players involved.

Fox, Martin, and Green (2007) indicated that the practitioner researchers needed to understand and locate themselves within the change process. Their argument is that change can be initiated for various reasons. This would mean that the practitioner cannot play an inactive role but their involvement is pivotal and helps alleviate incorrect assumptions.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to make an assessment of how the performance of individuals, groups within the schooling system impact service delivery in relation to the transformative policies that are being implemented. The system must be positioned to meet the demands of the current era through the products of its education system.

The study could influence commissioning of further research at primary school level in order to understand why learners and teachers struggle in meeting the expected performance standards which could be translated into service delivery. Judging the performance of schools currently is not comprehensive but limited to secondary school and only the exit level without assessing lower level classes and their impact on performance at grade 12. The system is rigid and focuses solely on matric pass rates without looking at the quality of primary education that feeds into the secondary and tertiary education.

The observation is that the Department of Education determines why things unfold in a particular way. The study focused on what makes one school do well and the other school fails. The outcome could be significant to learn from best practices as to what one school does that makes it a success and from worst case examples so that one can determine what not to do. Practices from schools that perform well could be translated into lessons that poor performing schools could adopt in order to improve.

The study could also assist in doing introspection for the system to check how far it has gone in terms of implementing policies that are geared towards bringing about total systems change. Rabiee (2004) showed the benefits of using interpretative phenomenological analysis because of its strengths and ability to developing in-depth descriptions of human experience.

Ultimately, the benefit would be to understand historic information, the status quo including inefficiencies currently in existence and what can be done to address such inefficiencies for the department so that action plans can be implemented to address the problematic areas.

1.7 Research Methodology

The research or study, as an exploratory study aimed at understanding service delivery at a school level was conducted in four schools which are under two circuits at Sekhukhune and Capricorn Districts. The actual demarcation of the research sites are as follows: (Setlakalana & Tshebela Secondary Schools) under Lebopo Circuit in Capricorn District while (Lephenye & Mosego Secondary Schools) under Dilokong Circuit are at the Sekhukhune District of Limpopo District.

The investigation was based on perceptions and assumptions that exist about the good and poor performance of any living system hence exploration within defined contexts was necessary.

Important to the study was the decision to employ feasible methods of collecting data considering the geographic location of the research sites.

Mingers and Taylor (1992) indicated that “the choice of suitable criteria to differentiate types of problem context will play a crucial role in determining the success or otherwise of a study relating those problem contexts to different problem-solving methodologies. Good criteria will result in similarities and differences being revealed which are very pertinent to the questions being asked in the study.”

The research process used a mixture of methods in gathering data in order to enrich the study.

These included literature reviews, interviews, analysis of reports of work done by others, official publications, discussion documents, official papers / speeches, news letters, theses and dissertations, newspaper articles as well as materials from the internet.

1.8 Research Ethics

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argued that “Ethics is certainly not confined to qualitative research or necessarily research that involves humans. Ethical issues are equally pertinent in clinical trials that are primarily quantitative, in research that involves animals rather than humans, in research that involves humans only indirectly (such as that which investigates human remains or documents that relate to people) and even in non-empirical research where the indirect or long-term consequences can be significant.” It basically implies that in any research that is undertaken whether on humans or animals, ethical issues will be raised.

The study concerns humans and it is done at their workplaces that must be given assurance that participating in the study shall not jeopardise them because of the information they shall have provided in any way hence protection was guaranteed.

At a particular point in time, participants might select what information to disclose for fear of victimization therefore, care must be taken that assurance is given in order for the researcher to get as much information as possible. Buchanan (2004) indicated that there are common and contradictory themes throughout the writings included herein, and these themes contribute to the complexity of virtual research ethics at this point in time, as seen through the lenses of discrete disciplines and countries.

Themes include informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity; privacy; public and private spaces; ownership, stewardship and the use of virtual data and virtual personae; participant recruitment; participant debriefing; virtual research with minors and the overarching theme of the changing roles of both researchers and researched in virtual environments. In dealing with the aspects of themes, participants were assured that the research process was not going to compromise any of the themes.

Creswell (2013) argued that the research process to get maximum or full participation from the research, participants must not be put at risk hence giving participants full information about their participation is essential. The research process complied with the requirement of ethics in gaining access to participants because consideration of ethical issues determines the success of the research. Request to undertake the research was sought in writing and approval was also given in writing by the Head of Department, District Directors and School Principals.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Transformation in the Public Service is a new concept that seeks to address past imbalances designed as well as bringing balance between policy development and correct implementation. Time, availability of resources and the geographic location of the research sites were limiting factors in carrying out the study.

The number of schools selected for the research were equally few given the population in each District hence generalization of the research to such a huge population might not give a representative view. Views from Schools Governing Bodies, Student Representative Council and Parents were not solicited and that could have enriched the results.

1.10 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter One

It is introducing the research and also summarizing what was done in all the chapters.

Chapter Two

Provides relevant literature which gives background information on what was done before on similar aspects of good performance and poor or under performance in South Africa and other countries around the world. This literature search assisted contextualizing the study with past and current debate into a particular perspective.

Chapter Three

Describes the methodology including data collection approaches used.

Chapter Four

It is about the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data as well as discussion of research results.

Chapter Five

This marks the final chapter of the study and is more about the submission of conclusions and recommendations made out of the study. Lessons learned from the study have also been highlighted in this chapter.

1.11 Conclusion

It outlined research problem, background; motivation, significance, research method and ethics as well as limitations of the study. The structure of the research chapters was also provided.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Highlights from previous literature on issues of performance and non – performance at school level was given. The research process deduced important issues from previous research on aspects or contributory factors to good and poor performance. Performance of the education system could then be understood within a particular contextual policy environment. This literature review focused on the aspects that will be responding to the objectives of the research.

To this end, the structure of presenting the literature covered the following segments:

- General views highlighted on experiences by different communities which also included issues of the geographic location of schools and distribution of resources.
- The learner, his/her role in achievement in relation to the curriculum.
- Curriculum content change and the speed of adaptation by the teacher and the learner.
- Teacher’ competencies and capability in relation to distribution and placement
- External factors beyond the school yard.
- The School Leadership and Management.
- Issues of School Governance and Learner performance.
- Highlights on different theories within the context of schools, school leaders, teachers and learners.

2.2 The Literature Reviewed

Boote and Beile (2005:2) indicated the following thinking that “a substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a pre-condition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research. “Good” research is good because it advances our collective understanding. To advance our collective understanding, a researcher or scholar needs to understand what has been done before, the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, and what they might mean in order to understand the present. A researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field.”

The research process would have been meaningless to perform any research without looking at what has been done in the past; given the selected sites in Limpopo Province, there are a number

of constituent factors to be considered in understanding the prevailing situation in the two Districts. The output at the end of the year is dependent on inputs from different stakeholders or role – players hence performance of schools cannot be looked at in isolation but in relation to both negative and positive contributions from relevant role – players. It was discovered be in linked to relations the school community has with its environment and how it responds and react to current, past and emerging issues from time to time.

It could imply that what works in one environment might not work in another. The research also subscribes to Pratt (2002:5)in the firm belief that “Although I do not argue with the basic tenets of constructivism, I do resist the rush to adopt a single dominant view of learning or teaching. Unless we are cautious, I fear we are about to replace one orthodoxy with yet another and promote a one-size-fits-all notion of good teaching”

This radical thinking simply indicates that situations are uniquely formed or created hence they will require unique interventions. Conditions within which actions take place have an impact on the actions that are displayed in such environments. School Leadership and Management was emphasised by Mandela and Samuel (2005) as an important aspect for investigation in relation to the performance of a school. A school cannot necessarily have good teachers and good learners hence emphasis on school management and leadership as a contributory factor to the performance of a school.

Jackson (2000, p.:193) argued that complexity theory seems to be user-friendly because it sees a role of managers in propitiating favourable conditions for self – organizing and learning. Jackson emphasises that flexibility and readiness of managers to manage and create new contexts. Jackson’s emphasises self – organizing as an aspect of importance in relationships.

Grounded theory, acknowledged by Alan Bryman (2012) as the most cited methodological approach to qualitative research that has been followed by a number of researchers. Creswell (2013, p. 26) indicated that qualitative research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, institutions in which they live and work or even the researcher’s lives. It is therefore important that the research process must be transformative in style in order for the value to be derived out of it. Creswell (2013) also

argued that qualitative research engages in a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging questions.

Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2006) refers to the quantitative research approach as a positivist approach. They further argue that research must be limited to what the research process can observe and objectively measure what is visible independently of the feelings, opinions and assumptions of individual which is an opposing view of qualitative research approach.

According to Welman et al. (2006), the purpose of quantitative research is to evaluate objective data consisting of numbers as opposed to qualitative research which measures subjective data streaming out of the minds of respondents. Quantitative research is numerical in nature because it is more about collecting data in the form of how many males and how many females etc.

A. Bryman and Bryman (2003, p.:14) when advocating for quantitative or positivist research stated that “positivism entails a belief that the methods and procedures of the natural sciences are appropriate to the social sciences. This view involves a conviction that the objects of the social sciences – people – think, have feelings, communicate through language and otherwise, attribute meaning to their environment, and superficially appear to be uniquely different from one another in terms of their beliefs and personal characteristics – qualities not normally held to describe the objects of the natural scientist...”

Morse (2003, p. 228) argued for the possibility of giving equal weight to the quantitative and qualitative phases but further stated that such approach may be too demanding for a single study due to time constraints, resource limitations and limitations of a researcher’s experience. It is for this reason that the theory of emergence in research methods given the current circumstances is more favourable i.e. allowing a new and relevant approach to work as long as it will provide relevant data for the research as opposed to confining the research to a defined method even when it does not lead the researcher to the intended results.

Alan Bryman (2012) argued that using mixed methods research is of advantage because the researcher could arrive at a more complete account of the issues under review than could not have been achieved if either a qualitative or quantitative research approach was used independently. Meaningful research results can be derived when the relevant

methods and relevant people are involved and the process is mutually owned by all parties. Semi structured questionnaires for both individuals and focus groups will be used for the study while one on one interview will be used to understand issues on both low and high performing schools.

The research process supports R. B. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.:15) in emphasizing the importance of mixed methods by reiterating that “if you visualize a continuum with qualitative research anchored at one pole and quantitative research anchored at the other, mixed methods research covers the large set of points in the middle area. If one prefers to think categorically, mixed methods research sits in a new third chair, with qualitative research sitting on the left side and quantitative re-search sitting on the right side. Mixed methods research offers great promise for practicing researchers who would like to see methodologists describe and develop techniques that are closer to what researchers actually use in practice”.

The Minister of Education has been given a mandate of providing quality basic education to all South Africans but the weakness is that the approach used is the same across and when there is shortfall in the system, the response mechanism is also the same yet a lot of challenges remain unresolved. After the announcement of matric results each year, the number of schools that are “dysfunctional “ increases instead of decreasing yet there is support that is provided to those schools.

What is ironical is that high performing schools are gradually decreasing while low performing schools are increasing at a fast rate yet support is provided to low performing schools. The weakness in the system is that support is concentrated in two types of schools i.e. under performing schools in the form of monitoring and support throughout the academic year; Club 100 Schools which produce more students who pass Mathematics and Science are given additional resources and additional support by the department and other sponsors.

This approach has been found to be biased to those under performing and good performing schools but neglects average schools most of which end up becoming poor performers because they were not being monitored and supported regularly. What got increased is the number of dysfunctional schools as opposed to the number of functional schools because when the system concentrated efforts on the good and the poor performing schools, the huge number in the middle moved to the negative part of the continuum.

R. B. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) advocated for the third research paradigm which is mixed methods in educational research aimed at moving beyond quantitative versus qualitative research arguments. They showed mixed methods as a research paradigm that recognizes the importance and usefulness of both quantitative and qualitative research.

In deepening the understanding, the research dwelt on a number of critical issues that concerns the learner, the teacher, the principal, the governing body, the circuit, the district, provision of resources to schools etc. It would also be critical to understand how the constituent members interrelate and interact in the quest of contributing to the provision of quality basic education. It would equally be interesting to understand where Education was before the new democracy, where it is currently and where it could be in the future.

2.3. Education in South African Rural Communities

Rural Communities have been found to be ideal research sites because in the course of research, research processes discovered what could not be associated with rural communities. Preacher and MacCallum (2002) spoke much about the importance of population in generating samples for research. There are characteristics that need to be looked at in making such determinations. The subject of study is therefore important in the choice of population subsequently the sample.

Mandela and Samuel (2005:77) on their study in rural communities argued that “there is a fundamental continuity between the lack of basic services in schools and in the community – water, roads, electricity and sanitation are in poor supply in the environment. Lack of basic services in the community affects schooling and impacts on the access to and quality of schooling. Infrastructure in the community and at school is high on the list of priorities of all participants”.

What was revealed by the study is rural schools are operating in environments where they do not have sufficient basic infrastructure (classrooms), human (teachers for critical and scarce skills like Mathematics and Physical Science), financial resources as well as learner and teacher support material like text books and stationery. The nature of challenges that schools are faced with contribute to performance drawbacks.

Graham (2009) spoke of missing data which might require collection of follow up data yet he further mentions that such is a difficult strategy which might not even be viable in some research settings because some participants might no longer be available. The essence of Graham's debate was that situations will occur in which missing data and attrition might affect research conclusions in an undesirable way is not totally ignored. Looking at the inter relationships involved within the schooling sector, it becomes evident that coordination of the relationships is important and needs to be considered.

Mingers and Taylor (1992) further highlighted that the management and improvement of systems requires that attention be paid to two sets of clearly defined processes which are planning and control processes. They also highlighted issues of simplicity and complexity of systems in quest of providing solutions. In the course of the study, it was discovered that the argument that problem context differs in a meaningful way from the others is correct.

Direct relationship between learner's good performance and poor / under performance and availability of resources or lack thereof has not been scientifically tested. The research sites have proven somewhat different results because in one District, a school with resource challenges has been performing well as opposed to a school with sufficient resources which could mean that performance was not necessarily driven by resources availability or lack thereof.

Moloi (2007:464) said that "In the new South Africa many daunting challenges are emerging and these raise questions about how the education of the young is best managed". This in itself is an emerging challenge and given the different backgrounds and the approach that is used to management of teaching and learning, it becomes very difficult to unbundle challenges of each learner since they are all different. School leadership needs to be explored in detail because it appears central to everything that happens in the school. It is critical to understand all role players and how they impact on the development of the whole school.

The research process discovered that rural communities experience challenges ranging from lack of properly qualified teachers, classrooms, learner and teacher support material, textbooks etc. These challenges confined their thinking to what they see and they cannot see something bigger hence when they end up passing, they stay at home because they do not have an understanding of

what to do next. Some students who passed matric well are discovered and referred to companies who give them bursaries and they still make it in life and are able to make amends.

2.4 The Learner and His or Her Role in Academic Achievement

Peter M. Senge (2003:47) wrote about taking personal change serious and he argued that “As children, most of us learn in our families how to avoid blame, to win and not lose in interpersonal conflicts, and to maintain the appearance of being in control. Children in school learn how to display behaviours that teachers judge as competent, to get 'right' answers and avoid 'wrong' answers”. Learning as argued is first admittance that there is a need for it and succeeding in that area will be determined by our willingness to learn even if the lesson must come from a person least expected.

The picture described by Senge suggests that we are our own products and are in control of our learning and what outcome of that learning. This basically means that learners might not have control over their environment or where they can chose to be in charge of their learning irrespective of the factors that might prohibit such learning. In many instances, learners who are not in charge of their learning have always sought reasons for failure and always shifted the blame to others.

Peter M. Senge (2003:49) further shared his thinking saying that “more managers today recognize that becoming a “learning organization” is rather a long journey not to be pursued because they consider it to be deep, inherently difficult, time consuming and personally challenging”. The same understanding could be applicable to the learner, teacher and principal hence every single player in the system has to play their part and be ready to take responsibility in order to see results based on personal contribution.

Prussia, Anderson, and Manz (1998:524) argued for the following ideology that “Self-leadership involves the influence people exert over themselves to achieve the self-motivation and self-direction needed to behave in desirable ways. Three distinct but complementary categories of self-leadership influence subsequent outcomes: behaviour-focused strategies; natural reward strategies; and constructive thought pattern strategies. Behaviour-focused strategies refer to specific behaviours that focus on self-assessment, self-reward, and self-discipline. Examples include identifying specific behaviours to enhance or modify, conducting a self-analysis to

identify long-term goals, identifying and self-applying motivational rewards, reducing habitual self-punishment patterns, and practicing desired behaviours”.

Prussia et al. (1998) demonstrated through a structural model how people move from self – leadership to self-efficacy and that is shown below:

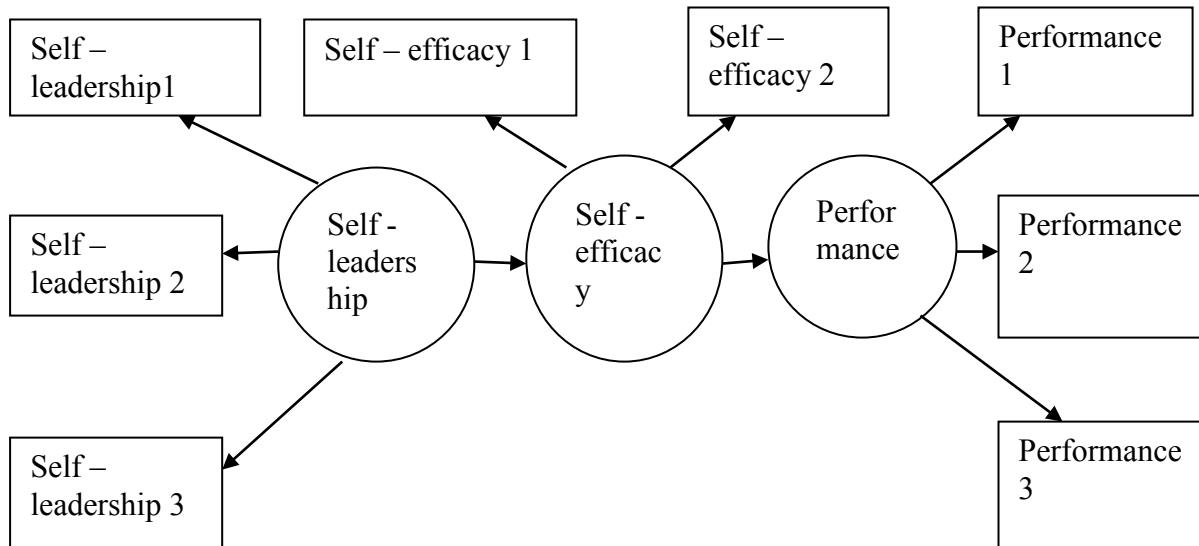


Figure 2.1 Structural representation of the proposed model by Prussia (1998). (Circles represent latent constructs)

What the learner believes in will be reflected on his or her performance therefore if learners are driven by the principles of self-leadership and motivation, they are well positioned to produce good results irrespective of the negative factors surrounding them.

Gustafsson (2010, p.:5) stated that amongst the factors that contribute to learner performance and dropout rates are constraints that seemed unavoidable. This is of concern to the Department of Education because when households with learners enrolled in schools are asked what they regard as the largest school problems; lack of books has consistently stood out as a problem more than other problems such as unaffordable school fees, poor school infrastructure and poor quality teaching. It appeared that learners who have dropped out of school gave financial constraints as the primary causal factor schooling without the necessary books was meaningless for them.

Daley (2001) outlined the quotation by Eagleton (1991) again that says, “The study of ideology is among other things an inquiry into the ways in which people may come to invest in their own unhappiness”.

Jackson (2003) highlighted a finding on complexity theory which states that, underlying chaos, there is a possibility to recognize patterns occurring influenced by the way systems develop. According to Jackson, the measures of success for soft methodologies are ‘effectiveness’ which addresses whether the system is achieving what needed to be achieved and also elegance which is about whether the stakeholders find the achievement tasteful.

In South Africa, schools are classified and categorized on the basis of their geographic location and are quintile based on where they are located. The system of quintiles is to the benefit of the learners. Schools are allocated funds according to the quintile in which they belong based on norms and standards set by the national department in the South African Schools Act by the President’s Office (1996). Limpopo is a case where distribution of books to schools has been a serious challenge and that has serious implications on learner performance.

There are still children who are reported to be schooling under trees instead of normal classrooms which creates risks especially in harsh weather conditions. Distances that children travel to school and the thought of having to learn under a tree caused learners in some areas to abandon school while others remained motivated under the same conditions. The situation affected some learners and not others mainly because their levels of determination and willingness to succeed in order to improve their lives were found to be different. Similarly, in this study the trajectory of underperforming and performing schools confirmed the same thing.

Learners in the school with basic resources were performing poorly compared to their counterparts in the under resourced school yet they are in the same village and same circuit. This is evident that it is not about resources or lack thereof but how the system is working in a given environment. Government responded to most challenges by introducing a number of grants to underprivileged and poor learners even in terms of education however; they still drop out for various reasons.

The Portfolio Committee on Education commissioned a study on “dropout rate and learner retention strategy in 2010. The report Education (2011a) published in June 2011 confirmed that the dropout rate from the school system was 4% and was seen after grade 9. With grade 11 having 12% which is quite huge because that in itself indicates that fewer learners enrolled for grade 12.

Reasons for dropping out from school vary and what was found out of interviewing learners who are beneficiaries was that most of them did not want to lose out on the collection of social grants which happens during school hours while others drop out because they are heading families and are forced to go and look for jobs in order to provide for their siblings. This is another area for possible future research.

The Department of Education responded to most of these concerns by introducing National School Nutrition Programme, No-fee schools and the Workbook Project and other interventions as a way of keeping learners at schools. Some are reported to be dropping because of continuous repetition in same grades which affects them psychologically.

Mingers and Taylor (1992) cited Ackoff (2012) who calls problems related to the planning process 'developmental' and problems related to the control process 'evaluative'. It is therefore important that problems are properly located or properly defined in order for the problem solvers to provide relevant approach in tackling them. Number of youth dropping out from school is escalating and that leads to increased numbers of joblessness / unemployment because of the absence of requisite skills and knowledge.

On February 2011, Michelle Jones from Cape Town Independent Newspaper reports about the survey done by Holborn and Eddy (2011) on behalf of the South African Race Relations which found that 51% of young people aged between 15 – 24 were unemployed. The survey also established that the unemployment varied between races. It further expressed concerns that the longer people stay unemployed, the more unemployable they become. This could be a matter that has relations to the impact of the South African education system and its products.

Gadbow (2002:51) introduced ways in which teachers can become learners, especially co-learners, with adults who seek to learn in many diverse settings. She further indicated that “While many aspects of diversity that the learner and the teacher bring to the learning experience are considered, the challenges become even greater, but the range of possibilities for new learning to occur can also grow dramatically”.

The learner is not the only one central here but the teacher who must become a learner by learning to understand the environment from which the learner is operating from because that influencing the pace and speed at which they learn. The research concluded that the relationship between the learner and the teacher irrespective of whether they are adult learners or young learners is of outmost importance. The relationship will inform the attitude which ultimately determines how learning will take place.

Ho (1994:4) indicated that “Linkages between Confucianism and cognitive socialization may be conceived in two ways. The first concerns the usual interest in the child's learning experiences; the second involves the representation of reality transmitted to, and subsequently experienced and internalized by, the child. Confucian thinking on morality and, by extension, knowledge in general, assumes a fundamental distinction between right and wrong, one that cannot be disputed, because it is an extension of the cosmic principle into the realm of knowledge. Human beings are capable of discerning this distinction, and the function of education is to enforce making it. Children must be taught, therefore, correct knowledge, not to question it.”

The teaching methodology appears to be another factor that influences learning. It might trigger interest or cause learners to love school or it might make learners hate school and drop out from school. This could be equated to learners who run away from home and become street kids. When a comparison is made on the performance of learners, care should be taken that the conditions within which the learning takes place and the relationships that shape them are considered. The assumption is that if children are coming from strained family relations, their performance is likely to be strained as well.

Jackson and Keys (1984:474) indicated that “the management and improvement of systems requires that attention be paid to two sets of processes? The planning process (broadly defined) and the control process (broadly defined). Problems can occur in relation to either of these processes. A problem in relation to the planning process might concern whether the relevant system(s) are pursuing the correct goals from the decision makers' point of view.”

Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer (1991:61) indicated the point that says “Portfolios have the potential to reveal a lot about their creators. They can become a window into the student's heads, a means for both staff and students to understand the educational process at the level of the

individual learner. They can be powerful educational tools for encouraging students to take charge of their own learning”

To this end, the research confirmed that it is not only the learner that matters in understanding issues of low or high; poor or good performance; functionality and dysfunctionality in the system. The system as a whole must be looked at through its compartments in order to understand how some sub – systems are interdependent on each other and how that influences performance or non – performance. What is emphasized is that there are relationships between the elements of the system and they function in an interdependent manner. In a school, there is a learner, teacher, school governing body, government, labour unions and all these have a particular role to play to make the system work. All relevant role – players have to assess their contributions, identify the risks and come up with more viable mitigation and rethink how the system will perform and how the interrelatedness will be maximized at a level of implementation.

2.5 Curriculum Content Change, the Teacher & the Learner

Jansen (1998) stated with great fanfare, culminating in the release of 2005 Multi-Coloured balloons, the Minister of Education launched Curriculum 2005 in Cape Town on 24 March 1997 that January 1998 marked as the implementation date of Outcomes-based Education is absolutely a non - negotiable. It marked the beginning of an on-going curriculum change in South Africa because the time for Curriculum 2005 passed, followed by National Curriculum Statement then Revised National Curriculum Statement and now we have what is known as Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement that the teacher must use in teaching learners.

In May 2011, Minister Angie Motshekga of the National Department of Basic Education released the implementation strategy targeted from 2012 - 2014. The master plan outlined the phase - in approach that will introduce the curriculum to different grades starting from 2012 through to 2014 as follows:-

- Grade R – 3 and Grade 10 in 2012
- Grade 4 – 9 and Grade 11 in 2013 and Grade 12 will be last in 2014
- Teacher Capacitation strategies must ensure that teachers are competent and are masters of the material content of the grades that they will be teaching and also higher grades for this curriculum shift to be effective. This is another part of the system that must be

managed properly. The confidence that teachers have will help them deliver the content to learners effectively.

Teachers can be considered primary learners in this age of freedom or democracy and them being learners; they need to be thoroughly prepared before they teach the secondary learners who are their legitimate learners at school. This aspect of the transformation affects all teachers irrespective of whether they come from urban or rural schools but the impact will not be felt the same way by children in these different environments. It therefore becomes important to understand different environments within which these issues are experienced. Teachers are very instrumental in the learning process and they are seen as individuals who have power of influence in shaping the behaviours of learners.

Jansen (2003) examined the validity of a model that sought to establish the relationship of educational research and educational policy making within the South African experience. Implementation of policies could be realized with ease if policy is based on evidence. McNulty and Ferlie (2004:1390) argues that “Organizational transformation is clearly implied in the idealized image of ‘process organization’ and the rhetoric of Business processes Reengineering (BPR) which claims to effect dramatic change and improvement in organizational processes and performance.”

Crouch and Mabogoane (1998) advocated for a system that seeks to balance all the acts within a schooling system instead of focusing attention in a biased manner while neglecting other important pillars that will make the education system works. The balancing act is needed by both environments because the research process did not suggest that all was perfect in both situations.

Their study further revealed the limitations of intended organizational transformation particularly of radical top – down change strategies in the public services. This has proven to be true in that when one visit schools, it becomes evident that these imposed strategies do not seem to be yielding results though in the South African Public Services given the structural arrangements of National, Provincial, District and Circuit Offices prevails, the end user at a school simply received the orders and implement without understanding. Opportunities to interact with policy developers are not available and frequently asked questions remain unanswered. Different structures do not have opportunities to interact which leave implementers with a choice of their own interpretation because common meaning has not been outlined.

Wayne and Youngs (2003:90) argued that “Findings about the relationship between teacher characteristics and student achievement gains are very applicable to discussions of teacher policy. States generally specify requirements for teachers in terms of degrees, coursework, and test scores. Another way that knowledge about the relationship between teacher characteristics and student achievement gains figures into policy discussions is in the identification of trends in teacher quality or in the identification of problems to be solved” This point that is emphasized is that the unbundling complex problems by teachers are dependent on their competency levels which also can be used to predict the level at which learners will achieve at the end of the lesson.

Wayne and Youngs (2003, p. 109) confirmed the existence of a paradoxical relationship between student learning capabilities and teacher characteristics and abilities. A report on a study done in 2001, 2004 and 2007 by Education (2011b) on Annual National Assessment showed that Grade 3 teachers wrote a Mathematics Grade 6 test and 35% of the teachers failed yet in the same study, it was revealed that teachers had committed a number of mistakes when marking learners’ tests. This confirms that the teacher competence is very critical on the performance of learner in relation to Teacher distribution to schools.

What is also striking is how teachers are distributed to schools that perform well and those that perform poorly. There is apparently a stigma attached to teachers based on the performance of their schools. Accolades also go to teachers’ whose schools are doing well therefore, such schools will always attract good teachers while it becomes difficult for a school labelled dysfunctional to get good teacher on their roll.

Clotfelter et al. (2004:252) stated that “Missing from much of the discussion and debate of accountability programs is the systemic issue of how the accountability system affects the allocation of teachers to schools, and in particular the willingness of high-quality teachers to teach in low-performing schools.

To the extent, for example, that the accountability system discourages the best teachers from working in the schools with the largest shares of low-performing students, the accountability program could ultimately undermine the ability of those schools to raise the achievement of their students”. Improving the accountability systems could be a remedy in some parts of the system but might fail in some parts of the system. The structural arrangement in a school and leadership

and management must also be looked at in order to diagnose salient issues affecting or influencing performance.

2.6 Education Provision considered as a “right”

The Constitution provides that education must be provided to all and the Limpopo Department of Education talking about striving to opening the doors of learning to all. Spreen and Vally (2006:352) in simplifying the concept of rights within the education context argued that education reform has been situated within a policy frame that results in a tension between cost recovery and redressing historical backlogs. If a right must just be given, then every child would just take it as a gift. Ironically, beneficiaries of rights are expected to make an effort in attaining such rights. Therefore, it is not a free ride. The argument would probably be that all role players must selflessly contribute to the system what is expected of them in the most efficient way.

Bhorat and Oosthuizen (2009:1) undertook a study focusing on Grade 12 pass rates across all Grade 12-offering schools in order to provide estimates on the determinants of these pass rates in the post-*apartheid* period. This approach emphasizes that achievement which might not necessarily be accompanied by understanding and comprehension. They further realized that data is at the school-level rather than an individual-level.

In getting closer to the small things, the Bhorat’ study was biased and the findings could not have led to recommendations that would suggest strategies for improvement of the current administration within the schooling system.

2.7 External Factors beyond the School Yard

The under - performing learner’s life is not confined to the school borders but there are family and community issues that are detrimental to the achievement at school. A learner must be defined and understood within different contexts where he or she finds himself or herself. There are a number of contracts that learners sign in different circles that impact negatively on their school performance.

Battle and Coates (2004:393) found that “Academic achievement in Black adolescents has been of long-standing interest in academia. Often, these adolescents are from families for whom discrimination in housing, education, and employment is disproportionate. Achievement researchers often observe that Black students perform poorly when compared to European- and some Asian-American youth”

It seems to be evident in most families around the Province that most people are coming from a background where not all parents have been present during their school years hence it is normal for children to go on with their lives without the involvement of parents during the early years including school years before university life starts. Academic achievement is linked to the socio – economic condition of the learners. It could be another area of research to venture into where research could look at the relationship between poor-performance due to the absence of one or both parents yet the socio – economic conditions are of an acceptable standard.

The post – apartheid era is marked by family environment where parents are career- oriented that they are willing to migrate to any part of the country where an opportunity is presented and sacrifice the family and all family responsibilities. All this is done in the name of a desire to improve the standard of living of the family (including the school going children) by getting a higher paying job. This eventually opens up a gap and the children are left with no choice but growing up without their parents who would be expected to provide guidance and inculcate certain key principles.

Richter (2006:1) emphasised the point of fathering or fatherhood where in a term “ Baba” is articulated as a term referring to any older man who is expected to care, provide, protect the children who are not necessarily their own biological children. The point is that in situations where we have single mothers or widows with children, they were not supposed to be struggling alone because the fathers in the neighbourhood must play that part fully.

The implication is that fathering was perceived to be a communal matter. This meant that fathers were not expected to only look after their own biological children but to father all the children in the neighbourhood in order for them to cope because they were made to feel safe and have a sense of belonging not feeling like outcasts.

2.8 The School Leadership and Management aspect

Adams (1999:1-2) quoted principals who sounded very tired of the system within which they are operating and this is what they had to say : "We're told we're now to be instructional leaders," offered one of the administrators, "and we know that is desirable, but, in fact, my most pressing priority each day is getting water to my school."

Bush (2007:391) studied the significance of educational leadership and management in exploring the educational challenges in South Africa out of which he indicated that " there is great interest in educational leadership in the early part of the 21st century. This is because of the widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes. In many parts of the world, including South Africa, there is recognition that schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners".

Bush and Oduro (2006:359) made an argument that says that "Principals in Africa face a daunting challenge which includes amongst other things, working in poorly equipped schools with inadequately trained staff. There is rarely any formal leadership training and principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership potential. Induction and support are usually limited and principals have to adopt a pragmatic approach. Learners are often poor and hungry and may also be suffering the consequences of HIV/AIDS".

It is already clear that principals are surrounded by a number of issues that cannot be ignored because they keep disturbing the proper running of the school and need urgent attention. It is of utmost important that the basics be dealt with in terms of other issues followed by the core business which is leadership and management. Principals across the country are currently subjected to a programme with Universities on School Leadership and management. The approach was to subject principals of underperforming schools yet in Limpopo principals were mixed from underperforming and high performing schools.

Msila (2011:434) took interest in school managers particularly those of underperforming schools. He states that "All the schools represented are, by admission of the participants, "beset with varying managerial and academic problems" and are also labelled ineffective by the immediate

communities. Msila picked up that participants indicated a number of challenges that plagued their schools.

N. Bews and Rossouw (2007) stated that successful organizations adapt their structures to the needs of their missions which made them come to advocate for an argument that says that highly successful organizations often maintain a simple but appropriate structure that employs an adequate number of staff while avoiding empire building and padding with surplus staff. School leaders and managers are deemed essential in playing this role.

Knowles (2002) spoke about coherent organizations that achieve superior business results by creating a space where people grow, learn and find meaning in their work. In that environment, people are more creative and full of energy and are more likely to have fun in their work and are gaining a greater sense of satisfaction in their contributions. Managerial challenges overshadow the contribution of the principal yet it affects the input level of teachers and performance of learners in all respects. The weakness in one part of the system has a bearing on other parts of the system.

2.9 School Governance and Learner Performance

Bush and Heystek (2003:127) indicated the significance that South African democracy puts on the functionality of school governing bodies and school governance. They argued for a principle that says that “the democratic motivation for school governing bodies is at its most powerful and poignant in South Africa. Governance is only one dimension of a commitment to democratic institutions fuelled by an understandable reaction to the injustices and inequities of the past”.

According to Knowles (2002), people make more of a difference to each other, their customers, their partners, and the other stakeholders. People are consciously working toward a more sustainable future. People make coherent decisions. He demonstrates the model of natural tendency to self – organize. School governing bodies are very critical role – players in facilitating this function given the power they have. They are also responsible for ensuring the placing of teachers in schools.

Tikly (2003) also speaks about his thinking around the fact that “Governmentality also has a more specific meaning as a way of marking the emergence of a distinctly new form of thinking about and exercising power in certain societies”. The aspect of school governance has been introduced with a view of it taking charge of most governance matters at school level. This allows parents to participate on critical decision making process at a local level which means there are a number of school codes that can be determined by parents. The important factor is that parents must also come on board at the level of implementation of those decisions even if it means discipline.

Jackson (2003, p.:31) quoted Morgan (1986) who argued that “People who learn to read situations from different (theoretical) points of view have an advantage over those committed to a fixed position. For they are better able to recognise the limitations of a given perspective. They can see how situations and problems can be framed and reframed in different ways, allowing new kinds of solutions to emerge”

Communities have more access to the activities of the school and are more involved now than before. Legislation allows them to participate in the affairs of the school and make recommendations and decisions to a certain extent. This means that they are authorized to deal with challenges of underperformance or poor performance of the school within their jurisdiction. The composition of school governing bodies has critical components which include parents, teachers and learners who collectively can come with solutions to some performance problems.

2.10 Application of Systems Theory in Understanding Schools, School Leaders, Teachers, and Learners

Aronson (1996:1) indicated that systems thinking allows people to make their understanding of social systems explicit and improve them in the same way that people can use engineering principles to make explicit and improve their understanding of mechanical systems. Organizations have also been seen by researchers and scholars as living systems therefore the principles of systems thinking are seen as ways in which solutions can be provided to a number of complex situations.

Appelbaum, St-Pierre, and Glavas (1998) outlined an overview of strategic organizational change (SOC) and its managerial impact upon leadership, learning, motivation and productivity

in the change process. They indicated that change is essential in any organisation or system irrespective of whether it is performing well or not.

Choo (1996:329) studied the current thinking in Management and Organization and made the following understanding that “they recognize three distinct areas in which creation and use of information play a strategic role in determining an organization’s capability to grow and adapt. Schools can be seen as such organizations that have the capacity to grow and adapt provided the bare minimum is met”.

The researcher agrees with Espejo, Bowling, and Hoverstadt (1999: 662) in their argument that “The Viable Systems Model (VSM) is perhaps one of the most insightful and powerful tools available today for studying the structure of organizations. It focuses on the resources and relationships necessary to support an organization’s viability rather than on the organization’s formal structure, thus offering a way to overcome the traditional over-emphasis on hierarchical relationships. Its basic assumption is that viable organizations emerge when people find successful strategies for working together, to the extent that they are able to develop and maintain a group identity in spite of environmental disturbances.”

The system is looking for such an arrangement where distractors are dealt at the point of occurrence in the system which would mean that interference with proper functioning of the school has no place. The most important thing is for all parts the system to be ready at all times to fulfil their obligations.

This could clearly enable the school as a system to appreciate the fact that for it to work better there is some kind of connectedness with their well performing school because currently, the system does not concretize that reality; hence each one continues to work in silos and inhibits possible change. Senge argued that living systems have the integrity and are characterized by depending on the whole. He argued that same goes for organizations or a school if they were to understand the most challenging managerial issues that are directly linked to their performance will require them to see the system that generates the issues.

Jackson (2000:110) spoke about the Contingency theory which based on the organismic analogy, views organizations as consisting of a series of interdependence subsystems, each of which has a function to perform within the context of the organization as a whole. In principle, the

expectation from an organization is that each subsystem must know the function they have to perform for the organization to function well.

Jackson (2000:180) cited and supported Tracy (1994)'s argument that says that "organizations are, or should be alive. They are living systems and should be treated as such. They are living systems because they derive many of their most important characteristics from generic makeup of their members. Because of their origins, organizations exhibit the same essential processes and structures that you and I display."

The most important factor for Tracy is that organizations possess a template which governs their behaviours, development and production. Jackson (2000) cited Tracy by indicating that organizations seek to sustain themselves and are capable of doing so indefinitely provided that they are adaptive. This meant that there is a condition that organizations must meet for them to be sustainable. The conditions could be in the form of rules, principles or processes that organizations must observe closely. This implies that the school as an organization is not exempted from these requirements for it to function properly.

Roles of different players must be clearly articulated by the Department of Education. It confirms that the system needs nothing but effective leadership amongst other things that will ensure the efficiencies in the system to turnaround the current status of education to results – oriented education. There are other important factors that can enhance system efficiencies given the fact that there are a number of role-players in the system. The relationship of the role-players is essential for system's functionality or dysfunctionality. The area of weakness will be a situation where role are not clarified and that it disable the possible functioning of the system.

According to Knowles (2002), people make more of a difference to each other, their customers, their partners, and the other stakeholders. People are consciously working toward a more sustainable future in order to make coherent decisions. He demonstrated through a model of natural tendency to self – organise. He further indicated that if leaders and managers can purposefully engage this natural tendency or inclination to self – organise most of the time, we will be in the most sustainable position.

What is needed in the system is the engagement of the natural tendency to self – organise because outside have proved to have very little effect.

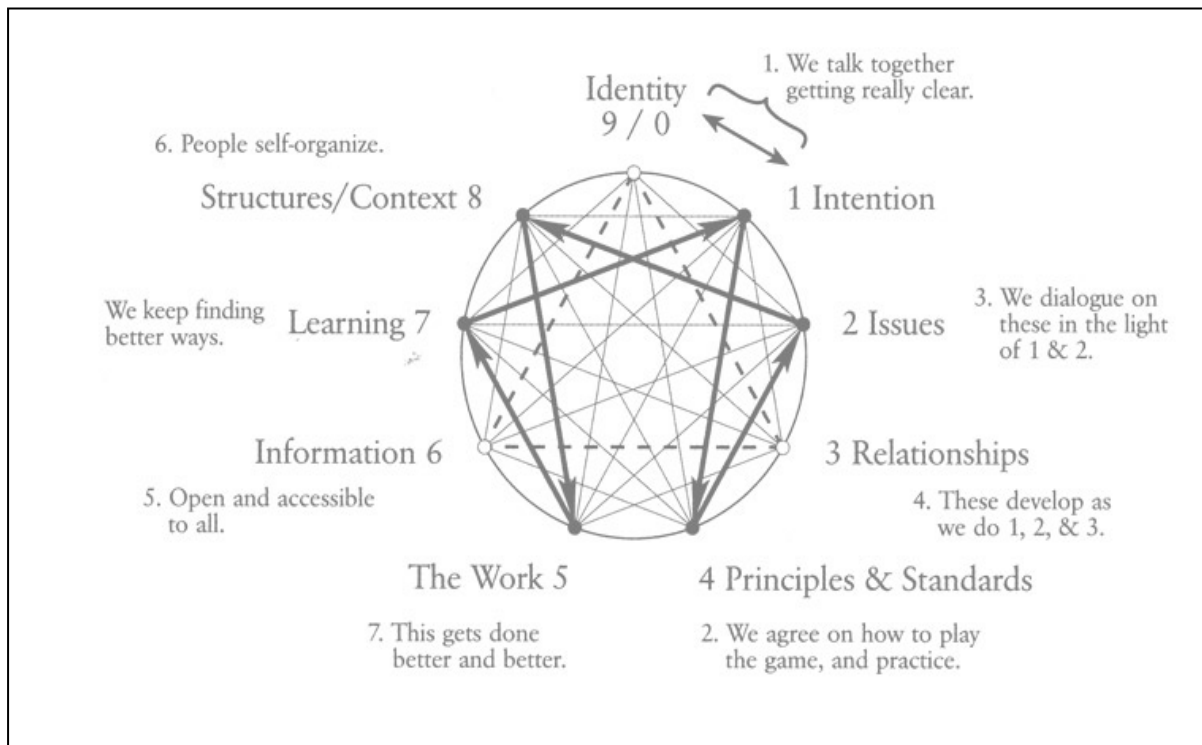


Figure 2.2 Natural tendency to self - organize adapted from Knowles (2005)

This model suggested by Knowles (2005) could be applied to assist in the change process especially in school where the whole school community is completely out of touch. There are a plethora of factors that are left unattended which could be instrumental in institutions that are struggling to pull the strings.

Peter M Senge (1990:69) indicated the following “Complexity can easily undermine, confidence and responsibility...Systems thinking is the antidote to this sense of helplessness that many feel as we enter the ‘age of interdependence’. “Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing the ‘structures’ that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage change. That is, by seeing wholes we learn how to foster health. To do so, systems’ thinking offers a language that begins by restructuring how we think”.

Morgan (1997) identifies nine organisational perspectives out of which it would be important to understand which organisational perspective is relevant in order to know how things are unfolding and how change could be effected.

Weick (2003) argued that interactions that attempt to manage uncertainty are a mixture of the intersubjective and the generic subjective, which is something of a hallmark of organizational sensemaking in general. Making sense of situations or environments where individuals interact and exchange ideas as a way of turning situations around.

Graham (2009) speaks of missing data which might require collection of follow up data yet he further mentions that such is a difficult strategy which might not even be viable in some research settings because some participants might no longer be available. What Graham (2009) states that situations will occur in which missing data and attrition might affect research conclusions in an undesirable way is not totally ignored.

An example given by Morgan is that of a machine organization which holds the view that Machine is not different from an institution that has human beings. Managers are taught that you can plan for and control organizations and divide organizations in functional departments with precisely defined jobs. Commands are given from the top and cascaded down throughout the organization in a precisely defined way to have a precisely defined effect. The wider environment is not isolated hence the contingency theory also highlights how the organization and the environment mutual relationship and influence are outlined.

N. Bews and Rossouw (2007) stated that successful organizations also adapt their structures to the needs of their missions, maintain a simple but appropriate structure that employs an adequate number of staff; they avoid empire building and padding with surplus staff. It would be important to start a change process considering what the issues were in the past because it is evident that attempts to initiate change have been there but the implementation of those change strategies is what cannot be confirmed.

D. W. Johnson et al. (1983) stated a factor that has not been emphasised by many researchers that students have a responsibility to play as active participants in the learning curve. They indicated that cooperativeness and frequency in cooperative learning situations were positively related to perceptions of support, help and friendship from teachers and peers.

2.11 Summary

Literature of previous studies was very instrumental in levelling the ground for research in controversial subjects like this study where contradicting views emerges. Strong leadership appears pivotal for the functioning of any organization irrespective of its size. In the context of the education department, leadership is expected from the highest level where the Minister takes responsibility to the lowest yet very critical level of the school, the principal. In summary, this chapter provided insightful information on different levels that play an important role in the producing good or poor learner performance results. The literature served as the basis and aid in the analysis of the findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

It provides an outline of a detailed methodology applied in carrying out the research process. Research methodologies with a differentiation of Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Method research as well as the Research methodology are covered. Further than that the population, sampling and sampling size, questionnaire design, pilot study, validity, reliability issues are outlined. Ethical Considerations as vital steps for success of the research process have been included. In essence, data collection processes and data analysis factors are covered in the chapter.

3.2 Research Methodology

The cornerstone of research is basically the research methodology. This should be determined by the nature of the research and the epistemological background informing the research process. The research might happen in a simple or complex environment which also informs the methodology to be applied. The environment being studied is complex hence it makes it even more difficult to decide on the most appropriate methodology. The research process subscribed to de Leeuw (2005, p. 233) in her belief that one of the most predominant challenges to survey researchers is deciding which data collection method or mix of methods could be used optimally to get desired results because all research methodologies have advantages and disadvantages.

Grounded theory is acknowledged by Alan Bryman (2012) as the most cited methodological approach to qualitative research that has been followed considered by research processes. Emerging demands during the research process usually necessitate the instigation of sudden changes and modification of the originally thought of methodology. It could be deemed innovative thoughts emerging out of the research process. The different research methodologies are discussed.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research

Creswell (2013, p. 26) indicated that Qualitative research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, institutions in which they live and work or even the researcher's lives. It is therefore important that the research process must be transformative in style in order for the value to be derived out of it.

Polkinghorne (2005) presented qualitative research as an inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people's lives. He further indicated that using qualitative methods to gather data serve as evidence for their distilled descriptions. Creswell (2013) argued that qualitative research engages in a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging questions.

3.2.2 Quantitative Research

Welman et al. (2006) refers to the quantitative research approach as a positivist approach. They further argue that research must be limited to what the research process can observe and objectively measure what is visible independently of the feelings, opinions and assumptions of individual which is an opposing view of qualitative research approach. Quantitative research is numerical in nature because it is more about collecting data in the form of how many males and how many females etc.

A. Bryman and Bryman (2003, p.:14) stated that “positivism entails a belief that the methods and procedures of the natural sciences are appropriate to the social sciences. This view involves a conviction that the objects of the social sciences – people – think, have feelings, communicate through language and otherwise, attribute meaning to their environment, and superficially appear to be uniquely different from one another in terms of their beliefs and personal characteristics – qualities not normally held to describe the objects of the natural scientist...”

A. Bryman and Bryman (2003) also argued that quantitative research is often characterized by practitioners as a process having a logical structure in which theories determine the problems to which researchers address themselves in the form of hypotheses derived from general theories.

3.2.3 Mixed Methods Research

Morse (2003, p. 228) argued for the possibility to give equal weight to the quantitative and qualitative phases but further stated that such approach may be too demanding for a single study due to time constraints, resource limitations and limitations of a researcher's experience. Morse also highlight that the sequential exploratory design has more of the advantage as the sequential explanatory design. It for due to this understanding that the theory of emergence in research methods given the current circumstances is more favourable i.e. allowing a new and relevant approach to work as long as it will provide relevant data for the research as opposed to confining the research to s defined method even when it does not lead the researcher to the intended results.

Alan Bryman (2012) argued that using mixed methods research is of advantage because the researcher could arrive at a more complete account of the issues under review than could not have been achieved if either a qualitative or quantitative research approach was used independently. Meaningful research results can be derived when the relevant methods and relevant people are involved and the process is mutually owned by all parties. Semi structured questionnaires for both individuals and focus groups will be used for the study while one on one interview will be used to understand issues on both low and high performing schools.

R. B. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.:15) emphasized the importance of mixed methods by reiterating the following point that "If you visualize a continuum with qualitative research anchored at one pole and quantitative research anchored at the other, mixed methods research covers the large set of points in the middle area. If one prefers to think categorically, mixed methods research sits in a new third chair, with qualitative research sitting on the left side and quantitative re-search sitting on the right side. Mixed methods research offers great promise for practicing researchers who would like to see methodologists describe and develop techniques that are closer to what researchers actually use in practice".

3.2.4 The Research Methodology Used

The aspect of viability was regarded as important given the geographic location of the selected sites hence the mixed method approach was chosen for this research. The study is exploratory in nature hence mixing was thought to be feasible because if there is

flexibility, more data and information can be gathered which benefits the study.

R. B. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) advocated for the third research paradigm in educational research aimed at moving beyond quantitative versus qualitative research arguments. They showed mixed methods as a research paradigm that recognizes the importance and usefulness of both quantitative and qualitative research. The basis of their argument was that it creates space to draw from the strengths and minimizes the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies.

R. B. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) described mixed methods research (mixed research is a synonym) as the natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative research, to present pragmatism as offering an attractive philosophical partner for mixed methods research, and to provide a framework for designing and conducting mixed methods research.

The research process subscribes to R. B. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) who supported mixed methods research which is arguably regarded as the research whose time has come because it is perceived as a paradigm that will be successful as more investigators study and help advance its concepts as they regularly practice.

The choice of the mixed method approach in this research subscribed to Charmaz (2011, p.:156) in the argument that stated that “Grounded theory strategies make the method explicit method explicit, and their open-ended qualities foster the development of emergent conceptual analyses. Grounded theory strategies prompt early analytic thinking and keep researchers interacting with their data and nascent analyses”. The study was regarded important hence; the complimentary advantage of mixed methods research was seen as the most relevant approach as an attempt to close the vacuum that could have been created by opting for either of the traditional methods.

3.3 Population

Welman et al. (2006) defined population as the study object consisting of individuals, groups, organizations human products and events about which the researcher wishes to make specific conclusions. Preacher and MacCallum (2002) spoke much about the importance of population in generating samples for research. There are characteristics that need to be looked at in making such determinations.

According to the departmental Publication Ramphele (2014), the Limpopo Department of Education has five (5) Districts out of which two Districts (2) were selected for this research. The population that was used came out of Sekhukhune District which has 33 Circuits & 327 Secondary Schools as well as Capricorn District with 32 Circuits and 355 Secondary Schools. It is a huge population and highly complex found in a vast area.

There are perceptions that the Head Quarters or Provincial Office usually makes assumptions of Districts, Circuits and Schools based purely on once off school monitoring exercises that could also be superficial. Districts supervise and manage the schools through the Circuit Offices in accordance to with the Structural arrangement.

Given the above cited population, it would have been ideal to undertake the research by using a sizable proportion of the population however, resources and more time would be necessary for a task of this nature.

For purposes of this research, the sample taken out of the population consisted of only four sites have been selected as primary research sites in Sekhukhune and Capricorn Districts. Two secondary schools (Setlakalana & Tshebela) under Lebopo Circuit in Capricorn District and two secondary schools (Lephenye & Mosego) under Dilokong Circuit at Sekhukhune District of Limpopo District. The focus was on performance of grade 12 learners but special interest was taken in tracing learner's performance at grade 10 and 11.

The research process is effectively indicating that a population could be a group of potential participants who could be circuits, schools, principals, teachers, school governing bodies and learners

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

According to Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1994, p.:366) in the Dictionary of Sociology, Sampling is explained as follows: "For practical and cost reasons, it is often impossible to collect information about the entire population of people or things in which social researchers are interested. In these cases, a sample of the total population is selected for study. The main criteria when sampling are to ensure that a sample provides a faithful representation of the totality from - which it is selected, and to know as precisely as possible the probability that a sample is reliable in this way."

Altmann (1974) though a very dated source indicated that “In order to choose a sampling technique, the observer needs to consider carefully the characteristics of behavior and social interactions that are relevant to the study population and the research questions at hand. In most studies one will not have adequate empirical knowledge of the dependencies between relevant variables. Under the circumstances, the observer should avoid intrinsic biases to whatever extent possible”.

Patton (2005) subscribed to the logic of our purposeful extreme group sampling even though it cannot be a representative of the whole population but has to be purposefully selected to focus on innovation and excellence. A sample is supposed to be representative in order for generalizability to be realised for it to have meaning. Welman (2006) argued that sampling could either be probable or non – probable.

This research process was limited to the following sample and sample size:-

- 2 District Directors.
- 2 Circuit Managers or their representatives interviewed.
- 4 School Principals or their representatives were interviewed.
- 4 School Management Teams members or representatives of the four Schools Were interviewed.
- 6 Educators each of Mosego and Lephenye completed the questionnaires.
- 6 Educators each of Tshebela and Setlakalana under Capricorn District completed the Questionnaires.
- 6 Learners of both Mosego and Lephenye completed the questionnaires.
- 6 Learners of both Setlakalana and Tshebela completed the questionnaires.

As outlined by the research process, mixed methods combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in order for sufficient agility in mining in-depth information. The process required flexibility in order to accommodate new issues that were relevant for the research process. In a given environment, the sample size was made up of 17 participants in each research site or institution.

3.5 Questionnaire Design

Different questionnaires were designed for different categories based on their role and responsibilities in order for relevant information to be sourced from relevant stakeholders. Design was elevated to different levels of roles and responsibilities of participants so that what is irrelevant for certain categories were not asked irrelevant information. The approach was geared towards asking questions that are not complicated but easy to understand in order to get relevant information.

The questionnaires design process took into account that participants who were learners, teachers, School Management and Leadership Members, Principals, Circuit Managers and District Managers had to respond in relation to their role in the functionality of the school and most importantly their contribution to the good performance or poor performance of their school.

The research process acknowledged the geographic dynamics of the research site and ensured that right questions are directed to the different categories since the role players were different. What was also acknowledged was that the research sites were remote hence the use of modern technological tools was not an option but physical site visit was considered a viable option. The most viable option was to self-administer the questionnaires and source additional information from participants in the most user friendly and comfortable method for the participants.

Participants had the advantage of seeking clarity on some questions in order for them to respond appropriately. Questionnaires were designed such that administration to individual learners, teachers, principals, Circuit Managers, District Managers at different times would be feasible. The data gathered out of the questionnaires would clearly demonstrate the views of the participants on the subject matter. The research process was flexible in that it had space on the questionnaire for participants to provide additional information relevant to the research process that they felt compelled to mention even though it was not required of them to do so. The research process was also aimed at embracing emergence and innovation as outlined by Charmaz (2008)

3.5.1 Semi – Structured Interviews

Drever (1995) argued for semi-structured interviewing as a very flexible technique for small-scale research because of its strength in confirming that planning must be done before the actual process unfolds so that participants get ready for the research in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

3.5.2 Focus Groups

The other level of data collection is getting information from focus groups one in which collective view is established. The importance of the focus group approach was to activate group thinking around the subject, individual thoughts were enhanced and new thinking was triggered because in a group people were reminding each other certain experienced relevant to the research. Focus group enriched the research because aspects of the research that would have been expected when the individual was responding only came up during the focus group because participants seemed more relaxed in a focus group setting than in an individual setting.

Bernard (2013, p.:197) explained various reasons for which focus group method could be employed. He also outlined the following reasons for making use of focus groups i.e.(1) to discuss how people feel about products like brands of beer or new electronic gadgets, (2) assess social programs (is the new day care centre providing enough support for working mother,(3) get stakeholder reaction to proposed programs (how do parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members feel about the proposal to move the start of the school year up by month), (4) explore whether questions on a survey seem arrogant or naïve or culturally inappropriate to respondents and (5) finally to help interpret the results of a survey or a program evaluation.

The other was face to face interviews with focus group and individual principals as well as direct observation at school level. The research process also made use of historical information available. The interviewees were informed about the approach of collecting data prior to the actual administering of the questionnaires yet questionnaires were designed to give space to participants to respond to them in the most comfortable way.

3.6 Pilot Study

Jansen (2003) in his article “*Can Research inform education policy in South Africa*” attempted to explain the relationship between research and policy in South African education. Steve Bruce and Yearley (2006) in the Sociology Dictionary, defined pilot study as a research project that is conducted on a limited scale that allows researchers to get a clearer idea of what they want to know and how they can best find it out without the expense and effort of a full-fledged study.

This study could be deemed a pilot study based on the fact that the population out of which a sample was drawn is quite huge. In Limpopo Province, the department of education has five (5) Districts with one hundred and thirty four (134) circuits and a total of three thousand nine hundred and fifteen (3915) schools.

3.7 Validity

Bernard (2013) emphasised the importance of reliability, validity, precision and accuracy of the data in the data collection process. Welman et al. (2006) argued that validity is the extent to which research findings accurately represent what is really happening in the situation. It was ensured by physical presence and direct observation. The process did not only focus on the positive activities on the research site but real life experience of participants in the four schools. Assumptions were made on a number of issues that are considered basic to the functioning of a school for example staff meetings where important policy issues are discussed as well as support visits by the Circuit, District and Provincial officials. In asking questions related to these issues assisted the research process to ensure validity of the assumed dependent variable.

3.8 Reliability

According to Louise Barriball and While (1994), the research process have to avoid at all costs possible errors in order to increase chances of credibility of results. Louise also argued that it is important to get all respondents representing all critical groups to respond in order to draw valid conclusions. Reliability according to Welman et al. (2006) relates to the credibility of the findings in which the question as to whether the evidence and conclusions would stand up to the closest scrutiny. In this case, critical respondents like the learner, the teacher, the principal and the circuit manager were

represented in all the schools. The argument is that research findings that can be repeated can surely be reliable.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

It is apparent that acceptable research process must be one that considers ethical issues since research involves the participation of people and things owned by people. What compromises the research outcome and the response rate of respondents on the interview date is failure to clearly or properly outline ethical issues. Formal requests for participation were sought in writing and permission to conduct the research was granted in writing by the District Directors.

Acceptance was also confirmed telephonically by the school principals, teachers and learners and suitable dates for the actual research chosen by participants. Creswell (2013) emphasised that the approach to a qualitative inquiry means less work for the researcher but what is important is the nature and number of ethical issues that surfaces during data collection in the field and in the analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports. He explained what was indicated by Lipson (1994) who grouped ethical issues into “informed consent procedures; deception or covert activities; confidentiality toward participants, sponsors and colleagues; benefits of research to participants over risks; participants requests that go beyond social norms”.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argued that “ethics is certainly not confined to qualitative research or necessarily to research that involves humans. Ethical issues are equally pertinent in clinical trials that are primarily quantitative, in research that involves animals rather than humans, in research that involves humans only indirectly (such as that which investigates human remains or documents that relate to people), and even in non - empirical research where the indirect or long – term consequences can be significant”. It confirms the importance of ethical issues in research and the readiness and agility of the research process when confronted with situations that might be difficult to resolve. In order to have maximum participation, due process was followed before, during and after the research process. The telephone calls to participants reminding them of the appointments boosted their confidence in the research process and they indicated they felt very special that their schools were chosen and would like to be considered for future research.

3.10 Data Collection Process

People are critical and important assets in carrying out any research. Polkinghorne (2005) argued that in qualitative research, it is important to clarify human experience as it appears in people's lives. To get to that clarification point, the time of the people the research process envisage mining data from becomes essential hence they need to be willing and available participants.

The research process made an attempt to deal with the difficulty of making decisions of whether to mix or not to mix methods, de Leeuw (2005) argued that times and methodologies are changing and certainly data collection technology is also changing. This indicates that with changing technology a mix will be ideal because in some environments, a particular technology might not apply and it might be necessary to switch because of technology compatibility.

Creswell (2013) also indicated that it is important to develop data collection matrix as a visual means of locating and identifying information of the study. The study will therefore explore different research methods and how the approach will unfold. Allowing flexibility benefitted the study by promoting participation and also sends a message that the schools have not been forgotten even though they are in remote areas. Mixing the methods and enhancing the study by direct observation gave a boost to the study.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2002) suggested a transformative data collection method with a view of integrating data collection strategies with the transformative goal of the research process. The argument was that data collection methods must be mixed in order to open up for participation in the social change. The research process followed mixed methods approach in order to source and cover sufficient information on the research topic. A mix of questionnaires, semi structured interviews focus groups and observation of actions and a bit of secondary data will be used to get the information.

Wright (2005) stated that researchers in a variety of disciplines may find the Internet a fruitful area for conducting survey research. This approach however, is only applicable to unique populations therefore it cannot necessarily work in cases where public schooling is concerned. The most reliable approach is one where the researcher delivers the questionnaires and collects them because in some villages, they do not even have access to Post Office facilities.

Bernard (2013) presented an argument about whether questionnaires should be self-administered or mailed. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that respondents are not put under pressure. It was further argued that postal services could be explored however, it was not seen as an option because it is viewed as an out-dated with low response rate. The most important thing is to ensure that a feasible method is applied based on the environment and what is practical because different situations will demand the usage of varying methods. The viable approach in this case was self-administered questionnaires because they were not going to cost the participants.

Lederman (1990, p. 118) described the focus group interview (FGI) as a technique for data collections for researchers interested in a variety of educational issues. She also emphasizes that the technique was embraced to explore people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It appears to be one technique that has manage to generate data about reasons behind the behaviour and also its ability to ask the kinds of questions that surveys dint ask and questions that individual interviews miss.

Bernard (2013, p. 181) said that “unstructured and structured interviewing approaches are used across the social sciences as the front end to the development of questionnaires and, in ethnographic research, as one of the main methods for collecting data. Unstructured interview goes on during the course of an ordinary day of a participant observation: in office, in factories, in patrol cars etc.” He further says that Semi structured or in – depth interviewing, is another of the main data collection methods in ethnography and it's also one of the main methods of collecting household surveys. It follows a general scripts but questions are also open ended.

In this research, data was collected per category starting with the Examination Unit which resides at the Provincial office. The purpose of getting an understanding is that the Unit is responsible for analysing the matric results at the end of each academic year. The analysis is based on the standards of performance and under performance thresholds.

3.10.1 District Directors

A lunch break opportunity arose during the departmental Strategic Review session during lunch break where a preparatory meeting was held with the District Directors to discuss the mode of operation for the research process. The meeting took the format of a focus group in terms of handling issues as opposed to interviewing District Directors individually. District Directors were taken through the process and requested to have a form of a discussion where they were asked historical information about the performance of the two schools which have been selected for research. Times of interviews were pre – set and permission to do the research was sought from them. District Directors were asked to give an overview of the schools including the history of the performance of the school performance and what the contributory factors were. Protocol issues were addressed before the research whereby prior arrangements were done regarding times and dates of the interviews.

3.10.2 Circuit Managers

Circuit Managers were required to complete interview questionnaires which were supplemented by additional questions as a way of making follow ups regarding their role and impact on their monitoring and support system which is their main responsibility. The most convenient venue which was their offices was used for the interview and prior arrangement was made in order to avoid disturbances. The sessions lasted for 30 minutes. What needed to be highlighted were steps taken by Circuit Management in support of the le asked questions that were not part of the questionnaires in order to source more information from them. The questionnaires for circuit managers looked at management issues including monitoring and support as the key performance areas for circuit managers. The expectation from the Circuit Manager was to make an evaluation of service delivery in both schools including mentioning intervention strategies for under performing schools while good performance is also nurtured and maintained.

3.10.3. School Principals and School Management Team Members

Different phases were followed in managing the interviews and that was coupled with direct observation. In responding to the set of questions prepared for them, school principals mentioned challenges which they believe must be addressed by other structures other than themselves. The questions were similar to questions prepared for Circuit Managers however, School Management Team Members and School Principals were required to contextualize to their level of

responsibility. What came up from the different levels was that the challenge was always shifted to a level higher up.

3.10.4 Educators

The level that followed was that of Educators or Teachers who also dealt with self-evaluation of service delivery in their own context and how they viewed and understood how things are happening in their school. Educators or Teachers were responding to aspects that affect the performance of their school either positively or negatively in relation to their roles. They were also highlighting motivating and demotivating factors in their school which could be linked to dropping of results or improvement of results.

Flood R.L (1998) cited Peter Senge (1990) who argued that events are distinct in space and time, but they are all interconnected. The argument was solely an indication that events can only be understood in the context of the whole. Teachers were also emphasizing the importance of relationships and the value of an integrated whole. Teamwork and Team teaching was suggested by the Educators.

3.10.5 Learners

The last group was that of learners who were equally responding to the questionnaire that was specific to their context in relation to their role as the beneficiaries of teaching and learning process. Learners were so excited about the event and more learners than the originally requested number were willing to participate. The additional learners were grouped into a focus group and open discussions undertaken to hear their views and juxtapose with what was observable on site. Learners were very honest in their responses. The expectation from learners was that they had to address issues related to their contribution to good performance or poor performance.

3.11 Data Analysis

Caracelli V. J (1993) placed emphasis on the importance of the five purposes of mixed – methods evaluations which are triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion when sharing their thoughts on data analysis. Convergence in getting rich information out of the analysis is empirical. In data analysis measurement or analysis done leads to a

conclusion. The process emphasized convergence because what was coming out of the different methods of data collection already enriched the information.

3.12 Summary

This chapter dealt with the comprehensive research methodology applied by the research process in order to lay the foundation for presenting and analyzing as well as making recommendations of the collected or mined data in the next chapter. It dealt with the different approaches including the instruments used which were enhanced by direct observation. It is on the basis of this research that data is presented and analysed in Chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

Data collected from the research methods was processed in response to the problem statement and objectives outlined in Chapter One. Welman et al. (2006) argued that this is the most important stage of the research process as it presents the results of the data analysis based on the Systems approach. These processes must eventually lead to recommendations. In order for data to make sense, the research process suggested the grouping of information into themes that will ease the presentation, interpretation and analysis. The content that flowed from the individual interviews and focus group interaction in relation to the subject of the study were all processed and analysed.

4.2 Rationale for Data Presentation and Analysis of Results

This section gives an account of what came out of the research process. Choo (1996) advocated that an organization uses information strategically in three areas which are to make sense of change in its environment, to create new knowledge and make decisions about the actions to be taken. This approach or principle could be applied by the research process in presenting and analyzing the collected data. Moving from this understanding the data collected was presented and analysed based on the assumed thinking of respondents.

The analysis concentrated on participants' experiences based on the categories of problems that are related to their own contribution to service delivery at a school level. An important aspect of categorization of data in order to do a thorough analysis is emphasized by Agresti (2002). This makes it helpful because the argument states that categorical scales are basically pervasive in the social sciences for measuring attitudes and opinions. What is emphasized is that the opinion of the researcher on a particular subject matter can equally be measured. Data must be presented categorically using categorical scales in order to measure outcomes on interventions that are introduced in schools where there are serious performance challenges.

Caracelli V. J (1993) highlighted a concern related to challenges of mixing the best parts of multiple methods to accomplish our evaluation tasks. This implies that categorization will assist in addressing this challenge. Wang, Storey, and Firth (1995, p.:624) came up with a framework of data analysis that is deemed to be central to credible results. The framework consists of seven elements that inform credible analysis which are: “management responsibilities, operation and assurance costs, research and development, production, distribution, personnel management, and legal function. The analysis reveals that most research efforts focus on operation and assurance costs, research and development, and production of data products”.

Wang et al (1995) further highlighted that unexplored research topics and unresolved issues are identified and directions for future research provided. The other important factor is presented by Graham (2009) in his writing on “ missing data analysis where emphasis is placed on the reality that there is no mechanism for handling the responses that were sometimes missing within a particular survey. This purely because those responses are not known as such, they cannot be handled. Emphasis is on the arrangement and order in which information and figures are to be put down.

In this case, different factors were arranged in ways that made it simply to understand and analyse. Looking at the data from the four schools studies, the research process drew an understanding and conclusions based on the data. Pawlak (2002) argued for rough set philosophy is founded on the assumption that with every object of the universe of discourse we associate some information (data, knowledge).

Preacher and MacCallum (2002) studied exploratory factor analysis and argued that levels of communalities played an important role even if low sample sizes of the population were used. This applied even in this study because the sample size was low in the context of the school population in the districts chosen for the study.

The other critical aspect highlighted by Preacher and MacCallum (2002) about the sample size was that it has potential limitations which are unavoidable however to deal with such limitations, expected factors must also be limited. Even in this study, there could be answers that could have been provided to which questions were never asked hence the analysis cannot be complete.

Kenny (1998) placed his argument on the phenomenon that is geared towards addressing problems such as non-independence of observations, measurement error and generalizability of results from specific operations which is also likely in this study based on the comparisons. Data was collected from individuals and focus groups hence the analysis must be fit for purposes since information was equally coming from different angles.

Rabiee (2004) tabled an interpretative phenomenological analysis as a framework for analyzing qualitative research data. In order to illuminate human experience, this framework has been strengthened to assist researchers to determine the type of questions for their research topics and subjects. In this approach, the research process outlined differences in meanings individuals attach to experiences are considered possible because they experience different parts of reality and that those differences will be reflected in their speech and behavior either directly or indirectly. Therefore, consideration of these factors when interpreting and analyzing data remains an important part of the research process

4.3 Response Rate

The two District Senior Managers for Sekhukhune and Capricorn District were available for an initial meeting which also the meeting that suggested the research sites. They were the link to the Circuits and the Schools and were available telephonically for responding to questions prior to the scheduled meetings with the other participants. This was a 100% response at the level of a District. Circuit Managers were also available to give an account and background information about the two schools each under their circuits. They were met individually and later with their Circuit Management teams as focus group to deal with issues at a group level. The benefit of groups was that issues that individuals could leave out were likely to be raised by other group members and they would receive overwhelming.

All four Principals were available for an interview and the completion of questionnaires was tailor made for Principals. In each school, Focus Groups in the form of School Management Teams, Heads of Department, Educators/Teachers and Learners were managed separately not as groups. With regard to learners, they more learners availed themselves and that called for flexibility and plans to accommodate them as focus groups were made because questionnaires were not enough for them to complete. Response rate was also good.

SETLAKALANA

The school with a population of 90 learners and 8 Educators including the Principal has been deteriorating for the past five years. All members expected to participate in the research were available i.e. the School Principal, 100% (3 out of 3) members of the School Management Team, 100% (5 out of 5) Educators and 100% (5 out of 5) learners participated while an additional group of unscheduled learners were in questioned as a focus group because they were available for questioning. The activities of the School did not seem to have precedence but what could be observed were people moving around the school yard. They all seemed interested in participating than a feeling of being busy and not wanting to be disturbed. The sense of duty feeling could not be established.

TSHEBELA

The School with a population of 378 learners and 18 Teachers including the Principal have been improving for the past five years. The school pride itself with their maintenance of learner discipline and the strong and responsible school governing body which serves as a support system to the school. In terms of agreed mode of operation, 3 School Management Team members, 5 Educators/ Teachers and 5 Learners were going to be the participants. All participants participated in the research as planned. More learners requested to participate and the option was to create space and get more information from them as a focus group.

LEPHENYE

The school with a population of 276 learners and 13 Educators including the Principal where performance has been deteriorating for the past three years. The principal indicated that there was shortage of teachers as well as that parents were not involved in the school affairs. Members who were set to be participants in the scheduled interviews which were the Principal, 2 Heads of Department, 6 Educators and 6 learners participated in the research. In essence, all participants honoured the scheduled interview and participated as planned.

MOLEPO

This is a school with a population of 288 learners and 10 Educators including the Acting Principal. They have been improving their performance irrespective of the odds that they were confronted with. Their main challenges were shortage of teachers and classrooms. The existing infrastructure of the school is in a very bad shape with no electricity. The prevailing situation seemed strange that the school stored its electronic equipment like computers and printers at the

house of a school governing body member. The Acting Principal who is at a level of Head of Department, 6 Educators and 6 learners who were scheduled to participate in the research participated as planned. What was evident was that the school was neither visited nor supported frequently hence most of their challenges were not being addressed. The commitment was one outstanding value that the Educators and the learners had.

4.4 Presentation of data

Jackson (2003, p.:65) further cited Senge (1990) who said that “ systems thinking is a discipline for seeing the ‘structures’ that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage change . . . Ultimately, it simplifies life by helping us to see the deeper patterns lying beneath the events and the details”.

The research process revealed the dynamics around the operations of the school and all other role – players who have interest in the running of the school. It can therefore be understood as a system within a system. Information or data was assembled and organized in accordance with the mixed method research approach that catered for the emergent issues during the research.

FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Achievement of the bigger mandate of the National Department of Basic Education through the Limpopo Department of Education in the two circuits and four schools.

A meeting was secured for this research with the two District Senior Managers after a Senior Management meeting which highlighted failures of Districts to execute the National mandate of providing quality basic education at school level. The District Senior Managers confirmed that there were weaknesses in the coordination of National Programmes from the Provincial Office and the District office. The weaknesses have been picked up at a structural level and that has a negative impact on the operational level.

From the Senior Management meeting’s deliberations, it became evident that there was a disjuncture with regard to the achievement of the bigger picture and fulfilment of the National Mandate due to a number of issues raised by different line – functionaries.

Understanding the views of critical role players in the school environment that makes the school either functional or dysfunctional

The system fails to produce results because of these weaknesses. Districts Senior Managers are the ones who are at the point of service delivery and the ones confronted with all these service delivery challenges including the blame for poor performance which could be caused by the weakness at a Provincial level. They indicated frustrations encountered when interacting with external role – players and the negative impact they have on the functioning of the school.

District Senior Managers spoke broadly on each school’ performance and the research process could pick up that they could be very instrumental in recommending strategies that could bring about change in the poor performing schools while strengthening the good performing schools.

They emphasized the fact that they were ignored at higher level in terms of employment of school leaders and the deployment of educators from one school to another yet they are the ones who understand the dynamics in each school. They emphasized a shocking revelation about the disempowering factor that the system does of listening more and considering inputs of external role – players than the inputs from within the system which are based on experiences.

School Governing bodies and Teacher Unions appear to be more powerful than the District Senior Manager who is expected to account and take responsibility.

Understanding the challenges that confronts the Provincial, District, Circuit and School management teams in enhancing performance

Efforts of each Unit seemed to be frustrated by the assumed non – cooperation of the other. There is no one Unit willing to take responsibility where there is poor performance however, every Unit claims their contribution in the success of a good performing school. The responses on the positive and negative aspects of the questionnaires particularly issues related to performance basing the arguments on key aspects of implementation.

Identification and understanding of external factors that threatens teachers and learners in producing good results

Teacher Unions were listed by almost all the schools as factors external to the delivery of curriculum which hampers quality curriculum delivery. It appeared that instead of them supporting the functioning of schools, they contribute to the disruption of normal schooling. The limitation of the research was that the views of the Unions were not sought hence the allegations of disruption of normal schooling by union activities could not be understood and contextualised.

Bush and Heystek (2003) argued that the South African Government clearly links governance to wider democratic objectives in its advice to school governors by quoting (Department of Education, 1997a, p. 2) “ Just like the country has a government, the school that your child and other children in the community attend needs a ‘government’ to serve the school and the school community.”

The research process identified that the objective of school governance is defeat the fact that most parents who must constitute the school governing bodies are not educated hence understanding of their roles in the governance of schools particularly in rural areas is compromised and very limited.

Abrami et al. (1994) spoke about the absolute authority of parents and teachers as both a symptom and a cause of authoritarianism. Emphasis was also placed on the moralism being an aspect that puts overriding emphasis on the development of moral character through education.

The following themes were identified:-

TABLE 4.1 Themes, Categories and Sub - categories

THEMES	CATEGORIES	SUB – CATEGORIES
School Performance	Good Performing School Poor Performing School	Policy Framework Resources
Leadership & Management Issues	Leadership Capability Guidance	Effective Leadership No Leadership Valuable leadership
Improvement Plans	Availability of Plans and implementation thereof	Planning & Implementation
Resources	Distribution Relevancy	User friendliness Cooperativeness
Determination & Will	Commitment	
Value placed on Time	Planning and use of time	

School Performance

In comparing the two Schools, the Lebopo Circuit Manager under Capricorn District simply indicated that the Principal of Setlakalana is never at school and can neither account nor take responsibility while the principal of Tshebela Secondary school is highly responsible and is in charge of the school. The argument was that the performance of the school is attributed to the quality of the school principals.

Performance of a school seems to be the sole responsibility of the school principal. At Dilokong Circuit, the Circuit Manager shared the similar sentiment of the quality of the school principal being the factor that contributes to the performance of a school. In this Circuit, Lephanye (the school that was doing badly had very attractive resources while Mosego, the school that was doing well was under resourced and only under the care of the Acting Principal.

Leadership and Management Issues

Effective leadership and management have proven to produce results in a good performing school while poor leadership and management failed to produce results in another in each circuit. Morgan (1997) described different forms of organizations which are helpful in understanding even schools as organizations where planning , control and division of labour was exercised. That was applied in the good performing schools while there seemed to be no arrangement of such nature in poor performing schools.

The good principal turned out to be a principal who led the school to improved performance while a weak principal also contributed to poor performance. Hitt (1995) cited Senge's ideas on the learning organization by quoting Peter Senge's (1990) who indicated that a learning organization is "an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future". At the beginning of each year, Provinces are competing for positions of excellence based on the performance of their matric learners, a system that is cascaded to Districts, Circuits and Schools.

Each Province, District, Circuit and School wants to be on top hence they strive to continually expand their capacity to create their futures hence Senge's argument of organizational renewal when outlining learning organization. Just as confirmed by Circuit Managers, where there was effective leadership and management, there were results while where there was poor leadership and management, there were poor results.

Improvement Plans

There was little understanding on the development, implementation and evaluation of School Improvement Plans which was supposed to be the strategy document for a school. This was irrespective of the fact that there were sound perceptions on what makes results drop or improve. The documents did not have real meaning to the schools but were done in order to comply with the requirement so that when the National, Provincial, District and Circuit Teams come to monitor they should find all basic requirements in place. The principal of Setlakalana is simply waiting for the department to close a school because he does not believe that the school could be rescued from the extreme condition. He has no plan underway while Tshebela is ready to maintain its status quo.

In Sekhukhune, the principal of Lephanye is optimistic that the school will go improve its percentage of performance by going above the threshold of underperformance in their matric pass rate on condition they are provided with qualified teachers.

Resources

There was a paradoxical discovery about resources and good performance and poor performance. All the four schools but one had basic resource requirements in terms of Human, infrastructure (classrooms) and Learner and Teacher Support Material. Masego Secondary school did not have the basic requirements ranging from Teachers, Learner and Teacher Support Material, Classrooms and above all that there was no Principal but one who was Acting yet the discipline and performance of the school was good considering their circumstances. The research process

found this to be ironical however, it confirms that leadership and management is essential to make a system work against many odds.

Table 4.2 Relationship between resources and performance

Name of School	Resource availability	Comments
Lephenye	Adequately resourced	The school is not making maximum use of the resources available for them e.g. IT Equipment & Educators
Mosego	Inadequately resourced	The school makes maximum use of what they have hence results continue to improve even against all odds.
Setlakalana	Adequately resourced	The school is not utilizing their resources but only excited and waiting for the closure of the school
Tshebela	Adequately resourced	The school is making maximum use of resources available for them while going an extra mile which is evident in the results at the end of the year..

Determination and Will of stakeholders

All stakeholders and role-players are determined and have positive will which made them register and recognize success in their environments while the opposite is the true for unsuccessful environments. The Provincial, District and Circuit Support system must be determined and willing to provide the necessary support for the school as an institution to succeed. At a school level, the Principal, School Management Team Members, Teachers and Learners must equally be determined and willing to make a difference.

Table 4.3 Relationship between Determination & Will and Performance

Name of School	Determination and Will	Comments
Lephenye	Educators are not interested	They come and sign in but not determined to produce results
Mosego	Educators are independent and determined to deliver the best and get results.	Their determination influences the learners positively and positive attitude breeds satisfactory results
Setlakalana	Educators not worried about anything and not determined to do anything that will surprise the Province	The principal and teachers alike do not see the essence of doing anything that will have impact and of value.
Tshebela	The determination of both learners and teachers in this school is amazing.	Each teacher is determined to make an impact in their own corner

Value Placed on Time

Equal importance was placed on value placed on time by all critical role – players and stake holders especially the teachers and learners who are the main subjects of success.

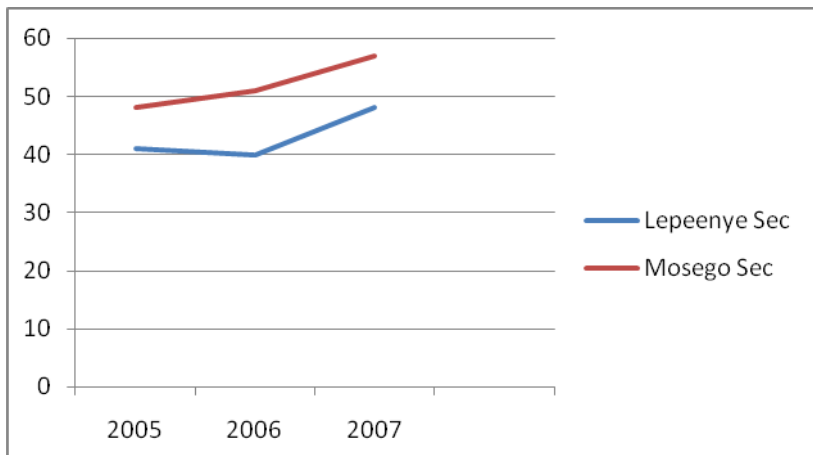
Table 4.4. Relationship between Value Placed on Time and performance

Name of School	Value placed on time	Comments
Lephenye	The school community which is inclusive of School Management Teams; Teachers and Learners not putting value on time, losing it means nothing	Though have good infrastructure and security, what happens in the school yard places no importance to time
Mosego	The school community values time and ensure that every minute matters and must be used to improve something	Time is not wasted, even after school critical activities are still pursued.
Setlakalana	The school community on the contrary while away time, come to school for formality reasons and sign a register while waiting for the bell to ring but not do something that will change the performance.	They all wait for the school bell to ring, even uses the waiting time playfully.
Tshebela	The school community believes every minute matters and time is available is used maximally.	The manner in which time is used explains why the performance is high.

4.5 Discussions of Findings

Jackson (2003, p.:126) stated that “Complexity theory is a holistic rather than systematic approach and emphasizes creativity and change rather than stability. When organizations are pushed far from equilibrium, self-organizing processes occur naturally and they become capable of generating more variety and responding more flexibly to their environments. Sustaining this ‘edge of chaos’ state is essential because today’s business environment is constantly changing as a result of decisions made by the tightly interconnected organizations inhabiting it”.

Taking into consideration all the factors and circumstances around the schools in the two Districts, the graphical representation of the level of performance which shows how application translates into the results.



Graph 4.1. Sekhukhune District – Dilokong Circuit – Compared School Performance

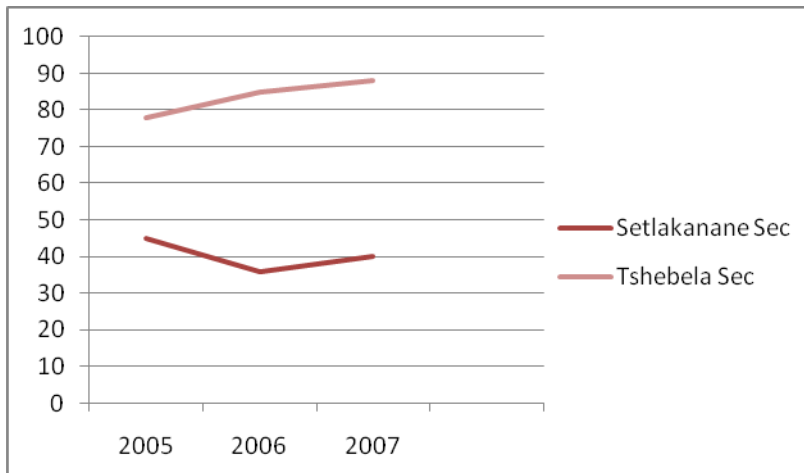
At a school level, the principal of Mosego Secondary School which has registered improvement in the Circuit Cluster stated that they still have a long way to go. She indicated that they are struggling with everything for example; the school has no electricity, no educators for the science stream, no security yet the teachers are dedicated and learners are committed to learn. The principal highlighted lack of coordination and integration in the system which weakens the support system and causes inefficiencies.

They got frustrated by the turnaround time for intervention from other stakeholders and support system. One paradoxical aspect about the running of the school that is improving their results on a yearly basis is that they spend more time with Learners and end up failing to comply with administrative work that is required from the school by the Districts and Head Office.

The size of the sample used cannot be generalized to the whole District because their challenges, weaknesses are unique. They have moved from seeing poor performance as something that the department must take responsibility of but they have started doing things for themselves.

The neighbouring school Lepeenye Secondary School has since 2005 getting below 50% matric pass but surprisingly, they have good and resourced infrastructure. The challenge the highlighted

was lack of educators on specialized areas like Maths and Science which made it difficult for them to break even and make progress.



Graph 4.2 Capricorn District - Lebopo Circuit: Compared School Performance

In Capricorn District there one would note that the gap between Setlakanane and Tshebela is extremely high. Setlakanane has only enrolled 90 learners and have 8 Educators. The highest percentage matric pass rate that the school ever got was 40% which was attained twice in seven years. A secondary school that cannot register above 50% matric pass rate is regarded a dysfunctional school. The school is also in the middle of nowhere and above all, it has no feeder primary school however, they accept learners who have been rejected in other schools.

On the contrary, Tshebela Secondary School has ever been attaining above 78% matric pass rate which has been the lowest percentage the school ever got while the highest has been 100% matric pass rate. The shortest explanation for the School' excellent performance by the principal was done in three words "Discipline of learners", Effectiveness of School Governing body" and lastly 'Team work". He emphasized that those were the principal driving forces behind the success of the school.

The general noting about poor performance of learners in some schools is as a result of attitude towards school and school work while shifting responsibility and arguing that "Educators do not have thorough knowledge to transmit to us".

4.6 Limitations

The system of accountability seemed not to have been established hence the difficulty of the research process to establish where the real problem is. The District Senior Managers, Circuit Managers and principals indicated that management is difficult because they are not having full control to deal with issues at school level. This is caused by the fact that they believe to be being micro managed by the Provincial office and such cannot take decisions but implement decisions taken elsewhere.

Schools that perform well have shown that the leadership and management at school level is strong, hence external factors and authorities do not interfere with their pattern of work. Contributions of critical role – players like the Teacher Unions and Schools Governing Bodies have not been addressed due to time yet they have a role to play in the functioning and improvement of teacher and learner performance at school level. Hitt, W.D (1995) adapted the hierarchical nature of organizational structures from Peter Senge (1990) in explaining how management must function in moving towards a learning organization.

He argued that structures needed proper management which requires an expertise at a particular level. The evolution from ancient times is illustrated below.

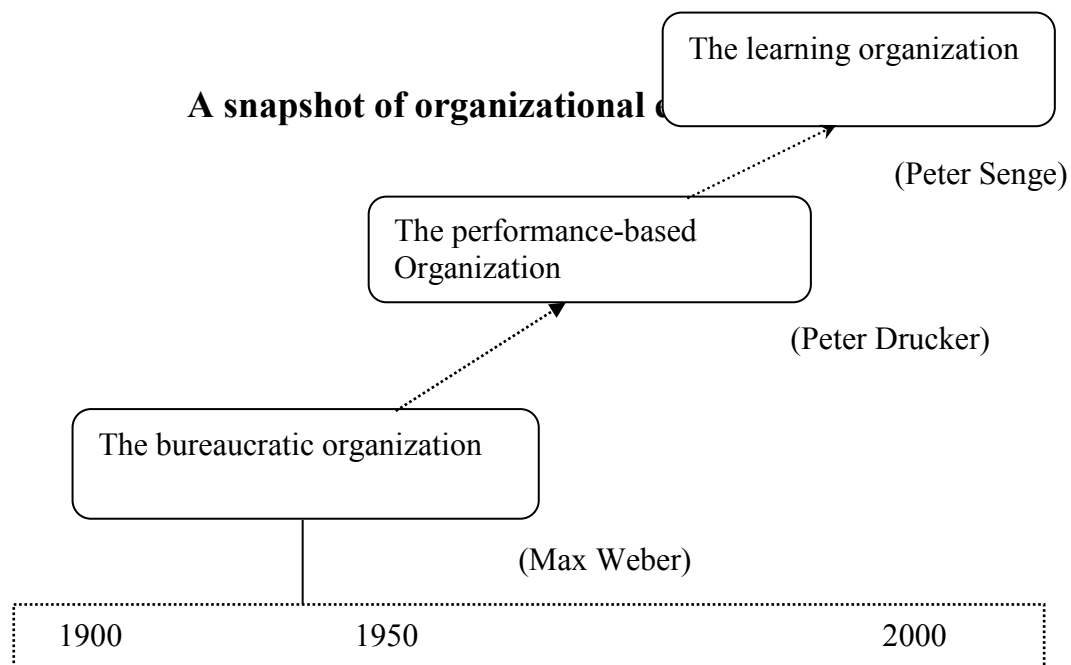


Fig 4.1 Organizational Learning: Hitt, W.D (1995) adapted from Peter Senge (1990)

The role – players from their different positions do have direct or indirect impact on the performance of the school. The plethora of stakeholders must synergise and coordinate efforts and manage their responsibilities in a way that will enhance performance that will improve results. Movement from bureaucratic to performance and eventually becoming a learning organization would be a milestone mostly desired.

4.7 SUMMARY

The research results streaming from the rationale of the presentation of data to the actual findings based on the objectives of the research were given. The performance highlights looking at the different themes were compared across the research cites that were sampled. Limitations of the study were also highlighted as areas that might need to be considered in future research. The last chapter provides conclusions and recommendations based on the discoveries of the research process.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together concluding statements and recommendations based on the findings of the research process without bringing in new literature. Conclusions are based on integration of the research findings, previous literature, and analysis of results covering aspects that will address the extent to which aims and objectives of the research process as outlined in Chapter 1 have been met. The understanding of the objectives of the research is outlined within the context derived from the evidence that has been gathered.

Recommendations which might have policy implication for the department will be presented. Specific actions which could be applied or generalized will be suggested while further investigations on issues of performance and non-performance are recommended. An important observation about the exclusion of Teacher Unions, School Governing bodies and parents should be highlighted as a matter for future research consideration. Conclusions and recommendations were outlined for each objective.

5.2 Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.2.1 Objective 1: To ascertain if the National Department of Education through its Provincial Limpopo Education achieved its mandate of applying relevant policies in managing the provision of quality basic education in those two circuits and four schools.

Findings from the Literature

Mingers and Taylor (1992) reiterated the importance of a co-ordinated research programme designed to deepen understanding of different problem contexts and the type of problem-solving methodology appropriate to each context. Looking at the inter relationships involved within the schooling sector, it becomes evident that coordination of the relationships is important and needs to be considered.

Findings from Empirical Research

The District Directors, Circuit Managers responses showed that there was a missing link in the coordination of activities within the schooling sector and lack of understanding of how the school relates to the Provincial and National Government. The mandate found expression in good performing school where determination and will of all stake holders led to good performance while in poor performing schools the argument could be that the mandate of providing quality basic education was not fully expressed. The identified themes indicated that the importance of presence and active involvement of all role-players was the most critical success factor for performance which is considered the ultimate goal.

Conclusions

Jackson (2000:110) outlined contingency theory which based on the organismic analogy, views organizations as consisting of a series of interdependence subsystems, each of which has a function to perform within the context of the organization as a whole. In principle, the expectation from an organization is that each subsystem must know the function they have to perform for the organization to function well. Given the reality that interdependence appears to be the underlying factor responsible for success, different authors displayed in their thoughts that each system must perform its functions fully in order for the whole system to be fully functional and be able to produce results. Literature confirmed that it is about systems and sub – systems at work.

Recommendations

The bottom-line around the objectives was also centred on the importance of interdependences of systems with the understanding of the school which is surrounded by a number of important role – players. The National, Provincial and Local Government and the various governance structures that have a role to play are all deemed important and necessary for the performance of the school. The system is totally interdependent therefore relationships must be strengthened in a coordinated manner to get results.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To understand the views of critical role players in the school environment that makes the school either functional or dysfunctional

Findings from the Literature

It is important to look at value placed on time in a particular context bearing in mind what Van der Berg (2008) said about getting a comprehensive understanding of the factors that inhibit performance in poorer, mainly black or coloured schools. This simply caution researchers and analysts about the multiple factors that contribute to the performance and non – performance at service delivery point like schools and public hospitals.

Stakeholders were found to be very instrumental in the school environment because of the different roles that have to be played. Involvement of all stakeholders was also regarded as an important ingredient for success. If communities, school governing bodies, teacher unions, and business people could invest time to work with schools, there will be change in the system.

Findings from Empirical Research

Research revealed that stakeholder participation in the running of the school affairs contributed positively in enhancing the performance while disengagement or non – participation of critical stakeholders contributed in the low morale of educators and learners because they felt that no one cared about them. Stakeholders included the National, Provincial, District and Circuit officials supporting the schools through visits and attending to their requests. The research process sounded like some form of support from the authorities because it caused a visit irrespective of the fact that the visit was investigative in nature.

Conclusions

It's therefore empirical to conclude that for the system to function properly, the parts of the whole must play their meaningful roles in a coordinated manner. All parts have to take full responsibilities and also account for the results whether they were found to be positive or negative. The poor performance or good performance of a system must be accounted for by all role players who have a responsibility in that system.

Recommendations

A review of how all parts of the system operate would be essential in that it will clarify roles and responsibilities. The most important aspect of school functionality would be for clear terms of reference for all the key stakeholders by the National Department. It appeared that there is currently no accountability terms and nothing is done to parties who did not do what they had to do to enhance the functionality of the system hence every level shifted the blame especially where there were traces of underperformance. When the system is functional, the leadership was likely to show evidence of team work but emphasizing the role they played in supporting the functionality of the system.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To understand the challenges that confronts the Provincial, District, Circuit and School management teams in enhancing performance

Findings from the Literature

Mandela and Samuel (2005:77) argued that “there is a fundamental continuity between the lack of basic services in schools and in the community – water, roads, electricity and sanitation are in poor supply in the environment. Lack of basic services in the community affects schooling and impacts on the access to and quality of schooling. Infrastructure in the community and at school is high on the list of priorities of all participants”.

The research process found that there was some level of congruity with regard to resources and performance however; direct relationship between the two could not be established. The pilot proved that determination was key to performance even in the absence of what is regarded basic infrastructural needs. Failure could be aggravated to other factors like lack of commitment and drive other than water, roads, electricity and sanitation at a school.

Findings from Empirical Research

Research showed that resource requirement, provision and non – provision played a very essential part of the system. There was one school (Mosego Secondary School) which when compared with the other three lacked all the basic resources ranging from infrastructure to human but the performance of that school kept improving. Availability or lack of resources could not necessarily be related to poor or good performance but the value of the right human presence

in an environment seemed more essential and critical. The serious challenge that the Provincial, District and Circuit Management Teams had to address would have been to place the right principals and teachers with required skills in schools in order for performance to be sustained.

Conclusions

In this case, resources and performance did not correlate hence infrastructure cannot be seen as the most challenging part of service delivery but the placement of human resources in schools is the most important factor in growing the school and producing results. The transfer and promotion of educators from other schools to other have an impact in service delivery therefore, promotions and transfers need to be analysed before implementation.

Recommendations

The system must be proactive in managing resources especially human resources for improvement to be maintained. Resource allocation must be a process that is done collaboratively and carefully. Good Principals and teachers must be encouraged to stay in schools where they are effective and incentivized so that they do not move from one job to another for incentives.

5.2.4 Objective 4: To identify and understand external factors that threatens teachers and learners in producing good results.

Findings from the Literature

Good Performing schools in most instances admit learners that are bright and parents also send their learners to such schools whereas poor performing schools are left with the slow learners, learners who were rejected by other schools, and those who have various learning barriers and socio – economic challenges. Most principals in good performing schools would not produce results that they get because educators in the good performing schools indicated their dissatisfaction with Management and how things unfolded at school but it is their drive and passion that makes them go an extra mile.

The poor performing schools have however reflected a serious weakness on management and leadership of the school irrespective of other factors. Daley (2001) outlined the quotation by Eagleton (1991) again that says, “The study of ideology is among other things an inquiry into the ways in which people may come to invest in their own unhappiness”.

Findings from Empirical Research

Leadership and Management proved to be an essential ingredient in creating a functional system. When National, Provincial, District and Circuit Management provided effective leadership, guidance and support to Schools performance were evident while where effective leadership, guidance and support lacked, performance always deteriorated. It was rare to find performance rising without the necessary back up and support.

Conclusions

It follows therefore that people especially at management level come to a point of accepting particular order and are content with it and look forward for someone to come save the situation as opposed to them addressing the challenge. In infusing a transformative mind-set leaders and managers, adopting a critical theory of adult learning should have at its core an understanding of how adults learn to recognize the predominance of ideology in their everyday thoughts and actions and in the institutions of civil society as advocated for by Daley (2001)

Recommendations

Self-efficacy and leadership would be ideal principles that could be upheld by the whole system however, it is still essential for leadership and support to be provided to the parts of the system for the whole system to function properly.

5.2.5 Objective 5: To determine what could be done to assist poor or under – performing schools to shift to a better category of performance and maintain good performance.

Findings from the Literature

It is further indicated that it should also illuminate how adults learn to challenge ideology that serves the interests of the few against the well-being of the many. This will move managers to a state where broader societal gains are issues of primary concerns to be pursued. What needs to be done is to assess the level of management capacity to manage and lead the schools as opposed to rushing for quick and easy solutions like closing down the schools and incorporating members to other schools because the real problems will still surface in the new environments.

Jackson (2003) highlighted an important finding of complexity theory which states that, underlying chaos, it is possible over time to recognize patterns occurring in the way systems develop. According to Jackson, the measures of success for soft methodologies are

‘effectiveness’ which asks whether we are achieving what we want to achieve and elegance which is testing whether stakeholders find what is proposed tasteful. Answering those questions appropriately helps the system understand and assess its position.

Findings from Empirical Research

In the past, school performance was not measured hence the introduction of measurement is a hurdle that must be jumped. The Limpopo Department of Education just discovered that grade 3 learners can neither read nor write and it became apparent on how they frame their responses during the study. It means that if our problems are foundational, the end product will be disastrous unless drastic measures are taken at the time foundation phase is exited.

The weakness in the system is that support that is provided to under performing schools is not properly coordinated and the results are therefore not significant. It was also deduced that people do not want to be associated with underperforming institutions hence more support was evident to good performing schools. Commitment to change for the better was confirmed but it needed backing from other structures for it to add value and inject positive impact to the system.

Conclusions

It can therefore be concluded that what is lacking in most of our system is that aspect of viability and self – regulation in a system that will assist it to achieve requisite variety when faced with a complex or turbulent environment. This confirms Jackson (2003)’s argument that problem contexts become more difficult to manage as they exhibit greater complexity, change and diversity. The schooling environment is one such complex environment whose problems given the contexts are very difficult to manage and subsequently resolve. If the system could be capacitated in order for it to self-regulate and self – sustainable, progress will be registered and replicated.

Recommendations

Mingers and Taylor (1992) cited Ackoff who calls problems related to the planning process 'developmental' and problems related to the control process 'evaluative'. It is therefore important that problems are properly located or properly defined in order for the problem solvers to provide relevant approach in tackling them. It is therefore recommended that integrated planning and coordinated implementation of programmes should be prioritized and strengthened.

5.2.6 Objective Six: To identify and understand critical success stories from good performing schools that could be replicated anywhere in the system

Findings from the Literature

Quality leadership and Management that inculcates proper planning, implementation and monitoring of plans is good recipe for effective performance. What this implies is that individual role players starting from the School Principal, to the teacher and the learner, what will be required for success will be self – leadership for progress to be registered. For the poor performing schools to move out of the bracket of poor performance, changing how they do things will be essential while at the same time for good performing schools to maintain and soar higher in their performance, they would need to be consistent with what is currently working while introducing new strategies for improvement as the future changes will be essential.

Findings from Empirical Research

Schools that were doing well were found to be having broadly defined planning and control processes. Culture that has been engraved in some schools is a secret recipe for success. Van der Berg (2008:2-3) argued about unexplainable incongruences between school performance, results and resource distribution in schools. Prussia et al. (1998:524) argued for the concept of “Self – Leadership” which involves the influence people exert over themselves to achieve the self-motivation and self-direction needed to behave in desirable ways. The concept of the strength of the self is empirical and a requirement for success in any environment.

Conclusions

Given the outcomes of the interviews and observations made based on the themes, relationship can be established in certain environment while cannot be generalised on others. When there is sickness in one part of the system, the other part of the system

Recommendations

Crouch and Mabogoane (1998) advocated for a system that seeks to balance all the acts within a schooling system instead of focusing attention in a biased manner while neglecting other important pillars that will make the education system works. The balancing act is needed by both environments because the research process did not suggest that all was perfect in both situations.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

The biggest challenge South Africa is facing today is that the educators who are to deliver the new Curriculum have not been assisted to migrate with the change as the curriculum was transforming, the system did not transform in its entirety. Concurrence is a non – negotiable with the undertaking that planning and control processes must be given equal attention in managing and improving the systems. The two schools that are doing well in terms of the national benchmark of achieving more than 50% must not sit back and relax because they are not on the media spotlight but they need to find ways of sustaining and maintaining their status.

It is also important to indicate that in poor performing school, hope is lost while the most improved and the excellent schools are dreaming for further improvement and they have actually spotted their weakness. It was shocking that in some environment, principals and some educators believe that closing down the schools will be the best possible solution. For them, there is no remedy that could illuminate the dark parts of the school.

Schools do have access to basic resource required in a school but where a need is highlighted they are mostly talking about computers which cannot be regarded as critical because most of the educators are not even computer literate. The one challenge that was emphasized is that of failure to fill vacancies where critical and scarce skills are involved because they are simply not there. Most schools are concentrating on issues that are not critical to the delivery of education but rather they look for a reason to defend themselves. Resources are not necessarily material resources, the aspect of human resources and balancing the supply and demand of those human resources is of importance.

Educators are “recycled” meaning changed and moved from one school to the other without paying attention of their skills and expertise which creates challenges like bloating of skills in one part of the system while the other is suffering scarcity because of the norms and standards applied. In all cases, all educators and learners are determined for the improvement of the education system however, they found themselves with the challenge of failure to grab what they should deliver to the learners and this leaves the learners frustrated and hopeless.

Self-leadership by all role – players must be infused into the system. For a person to be determined and have strong will self-leadership becomes an essential factor because when individuals possessing such characteristics are faced with complexities and turbulence, they will find it easy to self – organise and move forward. In other words, determination and will do not come without an effort therefore, it becomes essential for all stakeholders.

Time has also been raised as a concern for both educators and learners wherein learners blame educators for banking classes while educators blame learners for coming late especially when there is initiation. The challenge is quiet immense however, there are still simple strategies that could be employed to deal with it. Respondents believe that the effective use of time during and after school hours can have a positive impact on the outcome. Proper and good quality management and leadership that will provide coordinated planning, implementation and control at all levels are detrimental to the improvement and maintenance of standardized performance at any given environment.

5.4 Recommendations

Recommendations are taken from Adams (1999) who basically indicated that the quality of input determines the output which simply implies that there must be a relationship between what we put in and what we get out of the system.

It is therefore recommended the approach to the challenge is in the manner that will make all role-players participate in the development of a solution that will lead to the betterment of the South African schooling system. As a reflection, the development of education policies streams from a boardroom of people who have little or no understanding of the realities on the ground.

Policy interpretation is a grey area in that the highest structure that is at the National Office might miss out on what the policy is actually directing the educator at school to do. The misinterpretation might happen from National and when it gets to the province it is further interpreted differently and by the time the message is transmitted to the school, it has lost its real meaning.

This happens because the policy developer is far from the policy implementer. It is recommended that a closer relationship between the policy developer and the policy implementer be established. The next layer would be the structures created at Provincial level which has a

number of layers between the Head of Department and where teaching and learning takes place. This needs to be looked into as well.

The other challenge is that there are noticeable shortcomings on planning, organizing, facilitation change, leadership, management, monitoring, evaluation, assessment etc. Skills base required for effective and efficient teaching and learning must be provided systematically in order to address these issues. Flattening the structures shall have an impact but that would need a high level of skills at a corporate level.

In an environment where there are systems within systems, it is recommended that change focuses not only at an individual level because transformation and change will be a farfetched story therefore, all active parts of the system would be relevant to look at..

What cannot be avoided is that every learner in any school anywhere in the country: squatter camp / village / township/ urban area has an educational need that must be realised in order for them to achieve their dreams. The need requires a transformed education system. The discovery is that even the so called “Excellent Schools” have no viable systems in place and have hidden challenges that are also not addressed because they are performing at a particular standard which does not need attention even when they are deteriorating every year.

The Department must grow its capacity to deal with each and every school before their situations are beyond repair. Viable system methodology could also be applied in conjunction with the Soft Systems Methodology depending on the level of analysis of the contexts of the problems. Deep transformation is a process that everyone must be ready to go through to change and light the corner where they are. Some of the problems are starting at a District level through to the circuit and to the entire school because of the attitudes that management at different levels show.

There were other key stakeholders who could have enhanced the study like the Teacher Unions, Parents and School Governing bodies who were left out from participating in the study. These stakeholders should be considered for future research because their role and contribution could be very instrumental in deepening understanding and influencing future research and education policy

This is a positive thought that must be unearthed however, the most important aspect is the involvement, influence and support from parents irrespective of their educational level and orientation. In terms of the responses from learners, there is very little that they do after school yet in some situations; it was found that what is also done after school has a huge impact on the performance of the learners

The observation and analysis of the structures at different levels clearly show that there is a missing link at a structural level therefore, it would be a recommendation that the structures of the schools are adapted to the needs of their mandates because what was found was that most structures are not aligned to what the schools must deliver hence the myriad performance problems exist. For schools that seem to be hopeless, it would be important to find ways of helping them to self-organize for change to happen because unless they are prepared to move out of the mud they are in, no attempt from outside will make a difference.

People are central to injecting change to situations that are “sick” and if they are learning as their organizations learn, it will be easier for them to loosen the tight ends. People centred approach must be a key principle across all levels. School leadership and management training must be provided to school leaders for them to lead the transformative processes effectively. In this set up, individuals have little room for initiating change because what must happen is prescribed therefore they follow the book and cannot say anything if they suspect that something is wrong in the steps outlined by the book.

The research process is of the view that careful attention must be given to all known and emerging factors that have an impact on the outcome of the South African education system and enter into a journey that will be taking transformation to a more structured, coordinated level where all role players take responsibility and account.

In conclusion, the aspect of quality in all factors relevant to making the school function must have precedence. Lastly, the chapter reported on the findings, conclusions and recommendations out of the research objectives. It is also recommended that further research on relationships of different stakeholders is done in order to test their impact on the performance of schools.

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