

*Characteristics of an
effective school*

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November 2005

Characteristics of an effective school

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the

Department of Educational Psychology

of the

Faculty of Education

at the

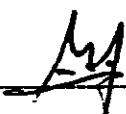
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November 2005

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation *Characteristics of an effective school* represents my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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November 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my most sincere gratitude to the following people for their resolute support, indispensable help and contribution in the completion of this study:

- My Creator, for the wisdom granted to undertake and complete this research.
- Prof M.S. Vos for her guidance and advice, and being a source of encouragement during the study period.
- Prof. G. Urbani for his valuable input and interest during the study.
- My wife Nompumelelo, for her continuous support and encouragement during my research.
- My children, Nosihle, Nokuthokoza, Luyanda and Bandile for their sacrifices and support during the research.
- My mom, for her support and encouragement.
- To all the principals who allowed their staff to participate in this study.
- To the educators who were brave enough to commit themselves by completing questionnaires and being honest.
- To all my friends and family who were a constant source of encouragement to me.
- Mrs V. van Rooyen for typing this dissertation.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

My late dad, **JOSEPHAT G. ZULU**

and

My wife, **NOMPUMELELO**

My two daughters, **NOSIHLE, NOKUTHOKOZA**

as well as my two sons

LUYANDA and BANDILE,

and

my mum.

Thank you for the sacrifices you made for me

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SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to investigate the characteristics of an effective school. School effectiveness means that the school satisfied external criteria such as the demands of the community, parents and learners, and does well against comparable institutions in areas such as examination results.

From the literature study it became clear that an effective school is one that can demonstrate quality in its aims, in overseeing of learners, in curriculum design, in standards of teaching and academic achievements and in its link to the local community. The literature supplied a vast amount of evidence to support the common notion that the characteristics of an individual school can make a difference in the learners' overall progress. What all successful schools have in common is effective leadership and a climate conducive to growth. An effective school is characterised by learner performance, educator competence, a culture of mutually reinforcing expectations, trust, staff interaction and participation in the development of instructional goals, curriculum and classroom practice.

For the purpose of the empirical investigation a self-structured questionnaire for educators was utilised. The data obtained from the completed questionnaires was processed and analysed by means of descriptive statistics. The findings from the empirical study confirmed that the effective functioning of a school largely depends on the leadership, management expertise and skills, the functioning of the management team, educators' commitment and accountable parental involvement.

In conclusion a summary of the study was presented and based on the findings of the literature and empirical study, the following recommendations were made:

- Training and guidance, in the form of workshops and/or seminars, should be given to principals on the effective running of schools.
- Programmes should be implemented by schools to empower parents in matters concerning their involvement in schools.
- Further research ought to be conducted concerning ways to improve the effectiveness of schools.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Schools exist to bring benefits to young people; in order to be deemed “effective” in this endeavour a school must stand up to scrutiny (Potter & Powell, 1992:5). The basic functionality of every school is to instil skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in all learners it serves, but in some schools this is not always realised.

For a school to realise its basic functionality, it needs to possess certain characteristics. There is now a vast amount of evidence to support the commonsense notion that the characteristics of individual schools can make a difference to learners’ progress (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1992:109).

Sidhu (1996:1) is of the view that a school is one of the most important institutions in any society. It is set up by society with a large number of objectives, which are of a very important nature. It has to play a crucial role in the building up of the society that sustains it. The function of developing future citizens is thus entrusted to the school.

School leaders are faced with mounting pressure in managing their schools effectively as government demands steady growth in education (Jenkins, 1991:14).

Research on school effectiveness has revealed a considerable number of characteristics pertaining to effective schools. These factors can be found at the level of classroom (especially in the use of instructional factors), the level of school (especially in the case of organisational and curriculum arrangements) and at the context level (which encompasses

the community, the district and state). It is probable that factors at all these levels can contribute to learning outcomes, broadly defined as learning results (Scheerens, 1989:81).

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

While the education system in the country is gradually changing, as reflected by the introduction of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), the *status quo* remains in schools, in that effective and ineffective schools still exist. This state of affairs can be attributed to many factors.

Some schools do not exhibit the characteristics of an effective school; hence chaos and lack of direction are the order of the day. Potter and Powell (1992:11) argue that increased powers delegated to heads and governors make them more accountable. Their decisions and the school's performance are open to increased public scrutiny. They therefore need a means of investigating what goes on in their schools, of justifying it, and of ensuring improvement where necessary.

Stringfield and Teddlie (1990:141) found differences between effective and ineffective schools, the effective schools being different with respect to more time spent on tasks, the presentation of new material, the encouragement of independent practice, the possession of high expectations, the use of positive reinforcement, a small number of interruptions, firm discipline, a friendly ambience, learner work being displayed, and the physical state and appearance of the classroom.

According to Badenhorst (1995:127) an awareness of external and internal forces or influences affecting education will help the school to realise that it has to perform its task within many boundaries and limits. The school cannot therefore always do as it pleases, but must be guided in its functioning by the realities that exist, the expectations that are entertained and the demands that are made by principles and norms.

As a point of departure, it is of vital importance for schools to do introspection. Each and every school need to have a clear understanding and insight of its basic social responsibility. A school that is functioning effectively is characterised by the following factors (Purkey & Smith, 1983:427-452):

- Curriculum-focused school leadership.
- A supportive climate within the school.
- Emphasis on curriculum and teaching (for example, maximising academic learning).
- Clear goals and high expectations for students.
- A system for monitoring performance and achievements.
- Ongoing staff development and in-service training.
- Parental involvement and support.

Van der Westhuizen (1995:658) argues that organisational effectiveness is the subjective evaluation of a school's productive capacity to change and the desire to change. The school delivers a variety of products and services in terms of teaching, learning and extracurricular activities. The relative quality, quantity and effectiveness of these results form one facet of the components of the total efficacy.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In essence the problem that will be investigated in this study pertains to the characteristics of an effective school. To understand the core of the problem, answers will have to be found to questions such as:

- What constitutes an effective school?
- What strategies can be implemented to assist ineffective schools to become more effective?

1.4 ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS

In the interest of clarity and understanding, it is necessary to elaborate on certain terminologies that will be used.

1.4.1 Gender

In this study all references to any gender include references to the other gender.

1.4.2 Education

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1988:366) education in its pedagogic form may be defined as the conscious, purposive intervention by an adult in the life of a non-adult to bring him to independence. Bearing this in mind, this assistance is the positive influencing of a non-adult by an adult, with the specific purpose of effecting changes of significant value.

The National Education Policy Act, Act No. 27 of 1996 defines education as any education and training provided by an education institution, other than training as defined in Section 1 of the Manpower Training Act, 1981 (Act No. 56 of 1981).

Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1988:417) are of the opinion that education occurs when social values, socially determined knowledge and life skills are passed from one person to the next. Education is a consequence of making value judgements about worthwhile knowledge and skills and deciding on the best ways these can be communicated and evaluated. Formal education occurs in pursuing what is worthwhile

by the conscious enactment of programmes to achieve desired goals within a socio-political context.

1.4.3 Educator

“Educator” means any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services at any public school (Employment of Educator’s Act, Act No. 76 of 1998). Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1988:371) suggest that the educator is independent, self-reliant, fully matured, supportive and able to render aid. In fulfilling his functions of support and aid, the educator assumes responsibility for education.

According to Parker (1998:3) an educator is a mediator of learning, designer of learning programmes and materials, leader and manager, citizen and community developer, learning area specialists or phase specialist.

1.4.4 School

According to the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 “school” means a public school or an independent school which enrolls learners in one or more grades from grade R (Reception) to grade twelve.

The school has to be looked upon not only as a place where knowledge is imparted in the traditional manner, but as a place where the learner is prepared for life through lifelike experiences. It is a place where the minds of the future citizens are moulded and where their habits, outlooks and attitudes are formed. Its function is to simplify, balance, rationalise, smoothen, organise, beautify and purify the activities of society (Sidhu, 1996:3).

1.4.5 Effectiveness

School effectiveness means that the school satisfies external criteria, such as the demands of parents and students, and does well against comparable institutions in key areas of performance such as examination results (Potter & Powell, 1992:5).

Whitaker (1994:89) stresses that effectiveness requires a commitment to continual development and improvement and a consistent striving for small but significant improvements, a process involving everyone in the organisation.

1.5 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The aims of this study are to:

- Pursue a study of relevant literature pertaining to the characteristics of effective schools.
- Undertake an empirical investigation among educators of their views of the characteristics of effective schools.
- Formulate certain recommendations in order to effect change on schools perceived to be ineffective.

1.6 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Research with regard to this study will be conducted as follows:

- An overview of available and relevant literature in order to base this study on accountable theoretical findings.
- An empirical survey comprising questionnaires to be completed by educators of the deemed “effective” and “ineffective” schools.

A purposive sample at schools in the Ethekwini region will be selected.

1.7 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

This research will have the following value:

- It will provide more information on the effectiveness of schools in the region where the research was undertaken.
- Based on the findings of both the literature study and the empirical research, certain guidelines may be formulated to assist in improving the effectiveness of schools.

1.8 ANTICIPATED DISSEMINATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

It is anticipated that research findings gathered through this study will be disseminated in the following manner:

- Seminars and workshops at schools and universities.
- Findings from the research can be useful in assisting to instil the culture of effectiveness in schools.
- The topic lends itself to further research by interested stakeholders.

1.9 FURTHER COURSE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2 will deal with literature review.

Chapter 3 will deal with research methodology.

Chapter 4 will deal with data analysis.

Chapter 5 will deal with interpretation of data and recommendations.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has served to clarify the need for the research, has defined its purpose and has stated the central problem and aims of the study. The method of research was explained and certain relevant concepts were elucidated. Finally, the further course of the study was set out.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The core mission of any school is to improve the educational achievements of all its learners. For a school to realise this basic function, all the relevant stakeholders must be actively involved, that is learners, educators, managers, education authorities, parents, communities, private sectors and the business community (Everard & Morris, 1990:11).

Transforming a school into a healthy, vital and stimulating workplace will probably be the greatest challenge for educators in this century. When one considers the schooling task of enabling all learners, and not just some, to master basic knowledge and skills, the task seems enormous. When one considers the lifeless patterns found in many schools, the task seems even greater (Snyder, & Anderson, 1986:1).

Hargreaves and Hopkins (1992:109) are of the opinion that there is a vast amount of evidence to support the common notion that the characteristics of an individual school can make a difference in the learner's progress. An effective school is one that can demonstrate quality in its aims, in overseeing of learners, in curriculum design, in standards of teaching and academic achievements and in its link with the local community. What they all have in common is effective leadership and a climate that is conducive to growth.

Harber and Davis (1997:27) furnish the following as a list of the characteristics of unusually effective schools:

- Productive school climate and culture.
- Focus on learner acquisition of central learning skills.
- Appropriate monitoring of learners' progress.
- Outstanding leadership.
- Active parental involvement.
- Effective instructional arrangements and implementation.
- High operationalised expectations and requirements for educators.

School effectiveness means that the school satisfies external criteria, such as the demands of parents and learners, and does well against comparable institutions in key areas of performance such as in examination results (Potter & Powell, 1992:5).

Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis and Ecob (1988:753-768) maintain that factors within the control of the principal and educators are crucial for the effectiveness of the school. The factors that can be changed and/or improved are:

- Purposeful leadership of the school by the principal.
- The involvement of the deputy principal.
- Consistency amongst educators.
- Structural sessions.
- Intellectually challenging teaching.
- Work-centred environment.
- Limited focus within sessions.
- Maximum communication between educators and learners.
- Record keeping.
- Parental involvement.
- Positive climate.

Although these factors are not a "recipe" for effective schooling, they can provide a guide within which different partners in the life of the school, i.e. principal and staff, parents and learners and education managers,

can cooperate. If each one of these partners plays a positive role, the result is an effective school.

According to Keith and Girling (1991:18) an effective school is characterised by learner performance and educator perceptions, exhibits a culture of mutually reinforcing expectations, trust, staff interaction and participation in the development of instructional goals, curriculum and classroom practice.

An effective school is also characterised by a number of elements based on cooperative and participative environments such as (Keith & Girdling, 1991:34-35):

- Effective use of instructional time.
- Orderly and disciplined school and classroom environment.
- Continuous diagnosis, evaluation and feedback.
- Well-structured classroom activities.
- Instruction guided by content coverage.
- School wide emphasis on basic and higher order skills.
- Opportunities for individualised work.
- Number and variety of opportunities to learn.

2.2 THE CLIMATE AND CULTURE OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

It is often the informal aspects of the school's organisation such as the school climate and culture, which contribute to its success (Badenhorst, 1995:78).

2.2.1 School climate

The climate of the school refers to the perceivable influence of all aspects of the school, i.e. the nature of work, the people, the architecture and the environment, the history and culture, the organisational structure, the leadership style and the interpersonal relationships on the

attitude, motivation and work of all the people in the school (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988:33). For a school to function effectively a climate conducive to teaching and learning must be present.

Kelly (1980:1) describes the school's climate as a reflection of its unique nature, character and personality. It is an indication of how the people in the school feel about the school. The climate forms the basis of the expectations of these people, as well as the interpretation of events and activities in the school, and has a strong guiding influence on the results obtained by the educators as well as the learners.

An effective school is characterised by a combination of warm and supportive relationships, an emphasis on specific directions of personal growth, and a reasonably clear, orderly, and well structured milieu. These environments have a high expectation and demand for performance (Barbarino & Elliott, 1981:110).

Kelly (1980:1) perceives the climate in an effective school as a feeling of satisfaction and productivity where the school is characterised by cheerfulness and hums with excitement and purpose. Classrooms are alive with expectancy. Educators and learners see each new day and each new person as opportunities for improving their understanding of the world around them.

Van der Westhuizen (1991:631) refers to the climate of an effective school as one where learners experience the quality of their working lives as determined by their relationships with their educators. These relationships are in turn determined by the management style of the principal and the way authority is exercised with regard to the learners as well as the quality of the mutual relationships of the learners.

An effective school is characterised by the fact that creating a positive climate is a management action, which aims at creating a more effective

organisational school climate. Fox (2000:2-4) sets the following aims for creating an effective climate:

- Work satisfaction for educators and learners.
- Maximum productivity by educators.
- Coordination of tests for a team effort.
- Recognition of the principle of human dignity.

In an effective school creating a positive climate is not regarded as a single, isolated action but implies that various other management laws come into effect. To create an organisational climate where educative teaching comes into its own, the school management team should continually make decisions, solve problems, coordinate, delegate, motivate, communicate, evaluate, and act correctively. These activities take place with the necessary grace, attunement and empathy to reflect the good intentions of the school management teams (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:634).

According to Hargreaves and Hopkins (1992:59) an effective school is characterised by its positive climate where order and a safe environment for staff and learners is maintained. Such a school is a safe place to work at and a stimulating learning environment for all participants in the teaching and learning process.

2.2.2 School culture

“School culture” is generally described as a particular dimension of an organisation whose interaction with other aspects of education contributes to the uniqueness, effectiveness and excellence of the school (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989:174). School culture is often briefly described as the collective beliefs, values, norms, attitudes, suppositions and expectations that bind all the people in the school (Deal, 1985:605; Peterson, 1988:252).

Van der Westhuizen (1991:629) is of the opinion that an effective school is aware of the powerful and positive meaning of the school culture and aims to establish a similar culture whereby definite guidelines and security will be increased. At the same time such a school culture allows space for personal initiatives and it may not suppress creativity.

Purkey and Smith (1983:68) conclude that an academically effective school is distinguished by its culture; a structure, process and climate of values and norms that channel staff and learners in the direction of successful teaching and learning.

Major elements of the culture of an effective school according to Gordon and Snowden (1993:113) are:

- A clear set of school-wide norms that emphasises the values of academic effort and achievements.
- A consistently applied set of expectations that stress the importance of staff members striving for excellence and learners performing up to their potential.
- A system of symbolic activity and sanctions that encourage and reward effort, improvement and accomplishment, while discouraging disorder and complacency.

2.3 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

2.3.1 Principal

The strong leadership of the principal is a mainstay; the principal's effectiveness is a continuously developing set of characteristics rather than a coordinated suit of clothes to be put on (Thurston & Lotto, 1990:75).

Wynn and Gutitus (1984:34) contend that an effective school is characterised by the principal who as an educational leader implements policies and decisions that assist in directing the activities of an organisation towards its specific goals. It is incumbent upon him as an educational leader, to establish a conducive climate for the development of the creative potential of others in the school and provide creative solutions to emerging problems.

The principal as an effective leader needs to manage in times of diversity, complexity, and unpredictability. Most school principals play many roles in the course of the day; they are at once administrators, politicians, parents, councillors, publicists, and transactional leaders and on occasion, transformational and moral leaders (Stoll & Fink, 1996:76).

According to Thurston and Lotto (1990:123) an effective principal must:

- Understand and implement educational programmes for curriculum development.
- Run the school efficiently and effectively.
- Understand the dynamics of the classroom and identify and supply effective institutional strategies.
- Coordinate the hiring, retention, promotion and dismissal of a large number of professional personnel.
- Master and coordinate the auxiliary services that support instruction.
- Establish productive relationships with parents and community.
- Implement a programme for social and emotional development of learners that goes beyond academics.

- Understand and effectively work within the legal framework provided by legislative mandate, bureaucratic regulation, and judicial decree.

Everard and Morris (1990:4) suggest that as an effective leader the principal should be the one who should:

- Set direction, aims and objectives of the school.
- Plan how progress will be made or goals achieved.
- Organise available resources so that the goals can be economically achieved in a planned way.
- Control the process.
- Set and improve organisational standards.

Van Schalkwyk (1988:114) defines the school as an institution for teaching and learning. Therefore the aim of the school must always be educative teaching and the overall development of the child. To realise this aim, all the activities of the school must be managed effectively. The school principal must therefore perform some of the following management functions in order to run the school effectively as an organisation:

- Plan activities in advance.
- Organise activities in the school.
- Give direction to educators.
- Exercise control over resources.
- Supervise educators' and learners' performances.
- Communicate with educators and parents.
- Resolve conflicts between personnel.

Everard (1984:124) sees an effective educational manager as someone who:

- knows what he wants to happen and causes it to happen;
- is responsible for controlling resources and ensuring that they are put to good use;
- promotes effectiveness in work done, and in search of continual improvement;
- is accountable for the performance of the school he is managing, and of which he is part; and
- set a climate or tone conducive to enabling educators and learners to give their best.

The principal remains the person who is, legally speaking, responsible for authority in the school. Even where the parents are involved in the running of the school, the principal is responsible to them, not only to the state. The principal's tasks are difficult and needs the full support of educators; he therefore has to delegate from time to time some of the tasks to subordinates, but nevertheless remains in the position of responsibility. The principal need not only to have to take interest in what goes on in the school; he also has to be informed about it (Badenhorst, 1995:36-37).

Paisley (1987:4-20) maintains that an effective principal is one who gets exceptional results from unexceptional resources, is prepared to do battle to increase the physical assets of the school and to improve their quality. An effective leader is able to establish a marked and pervasive climate in the school consistent with the school's educational objectives. This leader's school has firm values and clear objectives, which are reiterated often. In an effective school the principal secures agreement

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Paisley (1987:4-20) maintains that an effective principal is one who gets exceptional results from unexceptional resources, is prepared to do battle to increase the physical assets of the school and to improve their quality. An effective leader is able to establish a marked and pervasive climate in the school consistent with the school's educational objectives. This leader's school has firm values and clear objectives, which are reiterated often. In an effective school the principal secures agreement

with staff and the school governing body on the curriculum and its continual development. The effective leader gives learners access to the best available resources, monitors their use and takes corrective action. Such a leader liberates and maximises the motivation and abilities of staff through the structures and development decisions adopted.

The effective school leader has a complete grasp of the school's finances and systems, has up to date knowledge of them and makes them active instruments of school policy. The effective principal keeps standards of performance by staff and learners in the forefront of his thinking, based upon adequate information, and takes regular action to correct underperformance and to praise good performance (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:38).

In an effective school the principal is the one who builds a complete network of external contacts who serve the interests of the school. He also takes pride in and develops his own managerial skills, values the managerial skills of others and establishes the means to develop them.

2.3.2 School Management Team (SMT)

The school management team consists of the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments. This team has a variety of management and administrative tasks. The school management's tasks involve communication, timetabling, examinations, discipline, and implementation of the curriculum, handling correspondence and mail, administration of school records, managing the daily programme of the school, preparation of reports, purchasing teaching materials and resources, and establishing healthy relationships with the public (Mussazi, 1992:178).

The main tasks of the school management team are to plan, organise, direct and control (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:135-136). The identification of these tasks indicates the qualities and competencies,

which an educational institution has. The success of the school will be measured on the end result that the school provides, not on how effective the various management tasks have been.

According to McCallum (1995:19) an effective school management team seeks to:

- Empower individuals to make decisions.
- Foster an atmosphere of trust and risk-taking.
- Accord fair due process to all.
- Reflect a shared vision in decision-making.
- Communicate openly and honestly.
- Achieve consensus in decision-making.
- Provide adequate information for decision-making.

Bush and West-Burnham (1994:117) suggest that effective educational organisations manifest an ability to successfully adapt and respond to external demands. This visible success reinforces shared values internally and the organisation's reputation externally. Such a school management team exhibits three core characteristics, namely:

- They attract attention and loyalty because of a clearly articulated set of shared core beliefs and values, which guide all areas of activity.
- They attract a certain degree of awe and respect because of their ability to respond positively to new demands and challenges.
- They value and achieve successful relationships with all their stakeholders.

Organisation management according to Everard and Morris (1990:149) entails forming groups of individuals, building them into effective working units or teams, and getting these teams to work together effectively in pursuing the organisation's purpose and goals.

2.3.3 School Governing Body

Parental involvement in education has long been acknowledged in the South African education system. The South African Schools' Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 makes provision for both governance and professional management of public schools. The Act stipulates that each public school should have a governing body that is representative of all stakeholders. The Act gives meaningful functions to the governing bodies. Their functions may also be increased in accordance with their growing expertise, abilities and experience.

An important aspect of the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 is the emphasis that there must be a partnership between all stakeholders who have an interest in education for it to be effective. These are the state, parents, learners (secondary school), and educators, other members of community in the vicinity of the school, special education bodies and the private sector (Potgieter, 1997:7-8).

An effective school governance structure involves all stakeholders' groups in active and responsible roles, encourages tolerance and rational discussions on collective decision-making. The success of the school governing body depends on three factors (Maha, 1997:190):

- The leadership of the principal.
- The leadership of the chairperson.
- The effectiveness of members of the school governing body. The responsibilities of an effective school governing body according to the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 (Department of Education and Culture, 1996b:14) are as follows:
 - Determine admission policy of the school within provincial and national legislation.

- Govern the school effectively.
- Stands in a position of trust with the school.
- Determine the language policy of the school by taking the different language groups of the school and of the community into consideration.
- Adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with learners, educators and parents and implement it successfully.

According to Harber (1998:250) governing bodies have been given control over, for example, language policy, school times, staff appointments, budgets, the collection of school fees, the purchase of teaching resources and the use of the school facilities. However, for the governing body to function more effectively it may apply in writing to the provincial Head of Department (Department of Education, 1996b:16) to be allocated any of the following functions:

- To maintain and improve the school's property, buildings and grounds occupied by the school.
- To determine the extra curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy.
- To purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school.
- To pay the services of the school.

The policy handbook for educators, according to the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Section 49), states that all public schools' governing bodies are obliged to support their schools financially as best

they can. Schools where the school governing bodies are successful in the financial running of the school, can be seen as effective.

2.3.4 Planning and organisation

(1) Planning

According to Van Schalkwyk (1988:100) planning is an auxiliary process of management and it occurs in all facets of management activities, like planning of policy, financing, educational control, provision of physical facilities, etc.

School leadership in an effective school is characterised by sustaining a vision for the school and projects into the future. This function is evidenced by the school's leadership actions in structuring future activities that will alter personnel relationships, the nature of work required, and the procedures for doing so. The effective school leadership specifies goals, objectives, paths and milestones and must plan for strategies to meet them. Above all the leadership must define the group's worth in future activities (Thurston & Lotto, 1990:128).

Musaazi (1982:124) maintains that an effective school is characterised by its educational planning which involves the application of rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development, with the aims of making education more effective and efficient in terms of responding to the needs and goals of learners and society as a whole. Squelch and Lemmer (1994:22) are of the view that effective leaders understand the importance of deliberate and varied planning activities. An effective school would have a comprehensive plan that benefits all stakeholders by systematically indicating its future needs and steps that should be taken to achieve such needs.

Planning in an effective school is regarded as a process whereby the school establishes aims and specifies how these aims are to be attained. This process has two components, namely:

- Aims, as a broad statement of intent.
- A plan of action, as a specific course of action.

Badenhorst (1995:23) suggests the following as the general guidelines that characterises the planning involved in an effective school:

- Planning is usually geared to change. An attempt is made to look ahead and anticipate problems that may arise.
- Policy determines the parameters of planning. The educator's planning mostly revolves around instructional activities, and subject policy therefore serves as a guide in his planning.
- Planning is not rigid. It is flexible; an individual educator may deviate from his plans if such action is in the interest of the school.
- Human limitations are taken into account in planning. The leadership needs to know the staff capabilities in delegating.

Planning in an effective school is regarded as the management task that is concerned with deliberately reflecting on the objectives of the school, the resources, as well as the activities involved, and drawing up of the most suitable plan for effectively achieving these objectives. Planning is regarded as one of the most important tasks of an effective school and as it forms the basis of all other management tasks it is dependant on the quality of planning. Planning in an effective school is regarded as an intellectual activity; it involves thought processes by means of which future activities are pre-enacted to achieve certain objectives (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:137-138).

(2) Organisation

Musaazi (1992:4) defines organisation as a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons. The school realises its objectives through a complex system involving policies and programmes, administrators and educators, learners and supporting services, buildings and equipment, and interactions with the community.

According to Badenhorst (1995:17) organisation becomes necessary when two or more people are involved in the performance of a task. In an effective school work to be done is subdivided accordingly. The organisation of an effective school is characterised by its dependence upon cooperative activities in which leadership has an important role to play. The effectiveness of the school as organisation and of its all members is enhanced when there is a clear understanding of an agreement about the purpose of a school as an organisation and about the mode or style of leadership in the different parts of a school as an organisation.

Cloete (1986:87) distinguishes between various stages in the organising process of an effective school:

- Determination of objectives: leadership is conscious of the fact that the general policy act as a guide for envisaged objectives in organising a particular understanding.
- Horizontal division of work: for overall objectives to be achieved there are tasks that need to be undertaken, namely functional and management tasks. These are divided amongst different personnel to carry out.
- Vertical division of work: the principal delegates tasks to the deputy principal and he in turn delegates tasks to the heads of departments, and they in turn delegate to subject heads under their authority.

- **Coordination:** a balance is needed between division and coordination of tasks.
- **Control:** effective schools regard control as a positive sense of leadership. Leaders guide their subordinates at achieving the objectives of the institution by control through effective leadership.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1993:217) emphasise the fact that in an effective school the process through which these partnerships develop, and the way its members work together, is more important than the structure. Gaining commitment, developing trust and ownership, communicating openly and effectively, recognising and resolving problems, are all vital aspects of the process.

Purkey and Smith (1983:427-452) identify the following factors as representative of the so-called organisational factors that are characteristic of an effective school:

- Curriculum-focused school leadership.
- Supportive climate within the school.
- Emphasis on curriculum and teaching.
- Clear goals and high expectations for learners.
- A system for monitoring performance and achievement.
- Ongoing staff development and in-service training.
- Parental involvement and support.

The organisational structure of a school is regarded as the most independent variable which determines the efficiency of a school. In an environment where there is an organisational structure, and tasks and responsibilities have to be assigned to individuals; information is obtained about the activities so that adjustments can be made to improve the effectiveness of the school as an organisation (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:659).

2.3.5 Conflict management

Badenhorst (1995:86) suggests that because we live in an imperfect world, conflict between individuals is inevitable. When two or more educators have incompatible goals and one or both of them believe that the behaviour of the other prevents them from achieving their goals, conflict arises. No living and dynamic organisation will ever be entirely without conflict. It is therefore important that for the sake of school effectiveness, management should focus on effective conflict management so that the ultimate outcome will be constructive (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994:145).

Everard and Morris (1990:96-97) suggest that conflict in the sense of an honest difference of opinion resulting from the availability of two or more alternative courses of action is not only unavoidable but also a valuable part of life. The absence of conflict may indicate abdication of responsibility, lack of interest or lazy thinking.

Van der Westhuizen (1991:302) is of the opinion that, for a school to function effectively, methods used to manage all forms of tension, including severe conflict between members of staff, is of the utmost importance for the effective functioning of the school. For this reason it is important that the school management team is thoroughly trained in the successful resolution of conflict, otherwise it is not possible for management to do justice to the key role, which it fills.

The challenge for the school management is not to eliminate conflict but to minimise its destructive impact and make it a positive force in the school. For management to succeed in such a challenge, it needs to engage in conflict management that includes efforts designed to prevent or resolve disagreements between and among individuals and groups (Snowden & Gorton, 1998:85).

Gorton (1976:61) recommends the following steps to be considered by the school before deciding how to resolve a problem effectively:

- Identify and diagnose the problem.
- Set target objectives.
- Make decisions.
- Initiate problem solving.

Van der Westhuizen (1991:304-307) identifies the following different types of conflicts:

- Interpersonal conflict.
- Intrapersonal conflict.
- Individual-institutional conflict.
- Intra-organisational conflict.
- Short-community conflict.

In order for a school to function effectively it is necessary to identify and resolve conflict situations as soon as possible to minimise the occurrence of this type of complication. The school management bears in mind that no single member (party) can solve conflict alone. When cases of conflict are brought to the school management's attention, it intervenes as soon as possible in the capacity of a "process consultant". Management initiates this process by listening to the viewpoints of both parties and by understanding them better. Thereafter both parties are brought to the point of problem-solving (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:315),

Everard and Morris (1990:102-103) suggest that having set the stage for a meeting to resolve the conflict, the following principles should guide the discussions:

- Parties talk to each other as openly as possible about the real issues that concern them.

- They state their aims, views and feelings openly but calmly, and try to avoid reiterations.
- Contextualise the conflict for super ordinate goals and in the interest of the whole school.
- Attempts are made to focus on future rather than past events.
- Both parties listen to each other's viewpoint and try to understand it.
- Efforts are made to avoid moving to attack and defence.
- Both parties try to build on each other's ideas.
- They trust each other's good faith and try to act in good faith.
- They plan some clear actions to follow the discussions specifying who will do what by when.
- They will set a date and time to review progress and will help to achieve this at all costs.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988:119) are of the opinion that a school should employ one or more of the following styles to handle conflict:

- Competition.
- Accommodation.
- Compromise.
- Collaboration.
- Avoidance.

In order for a school to function effectively it needs to develop certain attitudes and skills for successful conflict handling. This includes management's ability to confront, or to say "no", when a difference of

opinion emerges, the ability to present ideas and feelings clearly, concisely, calmly and honestly, the development of listening skills, and of a habit of asking questions rather than making statements, as well as the skill of evaluating all aspects of the problem and understanding the viewpoint of the other party. The parties need to be able to articulate the common goals which should help both parties to rise above their differences about methods to look to the future achievements rather than past frictions (Everard & Morris, 1990:106-107).

2.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS

Staff development concerns the means by which a person cultivates those skills whose application will improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which the anticipated results of particular organisational segments are achieved. It is the planned influence of an individual's psychological processes, with the purpose to gain from staff an attitudinal commitment to the philosophy, values and goals of an organisation.

Guthrie and Reed (1986:321) regard personnel development as an investment in human capital. The dividends yielded include a more effective school and therefore improved learner achievement, greater personnel satisfaction and higher morale. Erasmus (1989:55) argues that as long as there are schools there will be a need for educators, and as long as educators are needed their development should be as effective as possible. Schools that fail to provide opportunities for personnel development jeopardise the ability to achieve their organisational goals (Castetter, 1992:346).

Professional development of educators is concerned with a range of staff training activities, irrespective of whether they are voluntary or mandatory, in-school or internally based, knowledge or skill based, of personal or school interest and finally, related to the curriculum-led staff development schemes or otherwise. An effective school creates a

credible, creative, positive environment for in-service training and educator development to succeed. It is also received by educators as being an acceptable part of a coherent school plan (Kydd, Crawford & Riches, 1997:180).

Everard and Morris (1990:89) identify some development needs for an effective school. Some will be specific to an individual, and although two or more individuals may have the same need, others will concern groups of people or even the entire school. These needs are:

- Induction.
- Preparation for future job.
- Requirements for new skills and attitudes.
- Introduction of new methods and approaches.
- Organisation development.

Conceptually, an effective school's educator development is not something the school does to the educators, but something the educator does for himself. It is basically growth oriented, hence educator development does not assume a deficiency in the educator but rather assumes the need for an educator in the school to grow and develop on the job (Sergiovanni & Starrat, 1983:327).

Musaazi (1982:194-195) refers to educators' development as the provisions made by educators' authorities to improve the performance of educators from initial employment to retirement. Since educators are part of a dynamic profession, they must be kept abreast of improvements in the teaching methods. One of the most effective ways to bring about curriculum change, teaching improvements and professional growth and development of educators, is through well-organised in-service programmes.

Van der Westhuizen (1991:239-294) is of the view that the effective educator development school should bear in mind the following staff developmental plans:

- Knowledge of staff members.
- Post description and information on the post.
- Evaluation of working ability for development purposes.
- Discussions with staff members in compiling this development plan.
- Making use of post rotation, i.e. changing work delegation so that as many staff members as possible can be trained on a variety of administrative and organisational responsibilities.

Effective staff development is a necessity for an effective school. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988:325) suggest the following clear patterns of an effective consistent staff development:

- A school-based programme in which educators participate as helpers to each other and planners of in-service activities.
- An in-service education programme that has differential training expectations and experiences for different educators.
- A programme that places the educator in an active role (constructing and generating materials, ideas and behaviour).
- An in-service programme where educators share and provide mutual assistance to each other.
- Educators are more likely to benefit from an in-service programme in which they can choose goals and activities for themselves.

Thurston and Lotto (1990:177) maintain that school efficacy is determined by facilitation of opportunities for educators' professional growth by enabling educators to attend conferences, and establishing mechanisms that facilitate the exchange of professional dialogue and management sharing ideas and materials with educators.

Professional development of educators in an effective school comes from within the school; courses are school-based and preferably short-focused. It ensures the development of the individual educator, the broadening of educators' outlook, the heightening of their professionalism and last but not least, the improvement of their effectiveness (Hodge & Martin, 1984:193).

2.5 MOTIVATION

Motivation is a factor which closely affects the performance of work and the overall efficiency of the school. Motivation is an inner drive which prompts people to act in a certain way. It involves a number of psychological factors that start and maintain activities towards the achievements of personal goals. All administrative action is of no avail unless members of the staff and learners are willing to contribute some efforts towards the fulfilment of their assigned tasks (Musaazi, 1982:43-45).

Van der Westhuizen (1991:386-387) states that the behaviour of people is determined to a great extent by their motives. The community and educators have divergent needs and therefore their motives for being involved in school activities differ. The management of an effective school is able to differentiate the motivation strategies to accord with both the educators and the community. Since motivation is linked to the establishment of relationships, the motivational activity of the school management differs in regard to internal and external motivation.

According to Allen (1973:175-183) the following principles characterise the educators of an effective school:

- **Principle of participation:** educators are involved in decision-making and in matters that affect them directly.
- **Principle of communication:** educators are informed about the objectives and the results achieved.
- **Principle of recognition:** educators receive the necessary recognition and work satisfaction; hence they are inclined to work harder.
- **Principle of delegated authority:** school management is prepared to delegate authority to capable educators.

Educators can be effectively motivated in, *inter alia*, the following ways (Jenkins, 1991:22-23):

- Higher order needs of educators are satisfied.
- They are given constant reinforcement through positive feedback – particularly praise, social recognition and visibility.
- Jobs are redesigned to be intrinsically exciting and motivating.
- They work in groups and in teams so as to motivate them and give them an exciting experience.
- They are allowed to contribute to the direction of the school and relate to its vision.

Brown, Armstrong and Thompson (1998:11) say that an effective school motivates its learners by providing learning environments and support infrastructure that are conducive to successful learning activities.

Sergiovanni (1987:297) maintains that motivated educators display the following patterns of behaviour:

- They are relaxed and behave with certainty.
- Educators are proud of the school and take care of it.
- Educators go about their work smoothly.
- Educators do not consider the school management as burdening them with unnecessary work.
- Rules and regulations are considered fair, and are obeyed.

To fulfil his function effectively the educational leader should have extensive knowledge of human needs and how to satisfy them. This makes the management to be sympathetic, caring and also understand people better and handle them better. The management is able to better motivate educators, thus raising and maintaining staff morale (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:296).

According to Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995:61) motivated educators are:

- Conscious about the quality of their work.
- Proud of their work and accomplishments.
- Highly productive.
- Look for alternative ways of solving problems.

For schools to be successful in motivating educators, they need not only have some knowledge of the educators, but must bear in mind certain factors which can enhance or weaken the effect of motivation, such as factors inherent in human beings, factors in education, management factors and community factors.

2.6 CURRICULUM

The curriculum of an effective school should be balanced and broad-based with the aim of promoting the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of learners at the school and society. It should prepare learners for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, (Everard & Morris, 1990:190-191).

Jansen (1984:132) describes the broad or total curriculum of a school as the aggregate of subjects and activities. A school's educational programme consists of curricular and extracurricular activities. The concept of a broad curriculum is thus indicative of the structuring of different subjects (learning areas) and activities in a school. According to Badenhorst (1987:97) the school's broad curriculum can be subsumed in the following programmes:

- Academic programme.
- Guidance programme.
- Extramural programme.

The curriculum thus has three aspects that is its actual content, how it is taught and managed, and how it develops (Paisley, 1987:13). In an effective school the curriculum is regarded as the natural centre of attention. It culminates in the productive work of the school and justifies its existence.

According to Glatter, Preedy, Riches and Masterton (1988:178) the school is an organic community, and the curriculum is the

comprehensive range of learners' learnings for which the school takes responsibility in the pursuit of educational goals and values, hence development needs to be a partnership and needs to focus on the whole curriculum and the whole learner. Some difficulties have been experienced or may be anticipated regarding school-based curriculum development, such as:

- Educator attitudes, values, motivation and alternative value orientations.
- Capabilities and skills of educators and others involved.
- Organisation, management and resources.
- The efficiency and effectiveness of school-based curriculum development as a general strategy.

According to Morris and Everard (1990:190-191) an effective school does not lose sight of its fundamental purposes in education, hence its curriculum satisfies the requirements of a balanced and broad-based curriculum which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical developments of learners at the school and of society, and
- prepares learners for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

2.7 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The best curriculum, facilities and educators in the world will be of no avail unless the investors (parents) are clearly seen as the *raison d'être* of the whole process (Smith, 1982:1090).

Parents lay the foundation for education and continue to play an important role throughout the learners' schooling. It is for this reason that for schools to function effectively they should work alongside parents. This co-existence benefits the school community as a whole. Effective schools are characterised by creating an environment that is conducive to parents to play their role as equal partners and co-educators to benefit their children (Horne, 1998:93).

Van der Westhuizen (1991:389) describes accountable parental involvement as of strategic importance in promoting positive attitudes on the part of parents. Parents are involved in the planning stages with regard to school finances. In this way the parent publicly gains greater insight into the complexity of the school finances and a better understanding of the financial restraints under which the school operates.

Parents as primary educators have a full role to play, which cannot be underestimated. In an effective school parents are actively involved in the formal education of their children in a significant manner, and all essential aspects of formal education. This parental involvement needs to be well managed by the school (Badenhorst, 1995:118).

Effective parental involvement helps parents discover their strengths, potentials and talents and to use them for the benefit of themselves, the family as a whole and the school (Dekker, 1993:155). Parent involvement can take the form of:

- cooperation, and
- participation, which leads to
- partnership.

According to Dekker and Lemmer (1994:160) for the school's effective functioning parents' potential as partners in education needs to be

enhanced hence the orientation, education and training of parents for partnership in education cannot be ignored.

Berger (1987:136) suggests that an effective home-school community relationship is based on two important principles, namely:

- An attitude that welcomes parents and conducts activities that invites them into the school.
- The setting up of a one or two-way communication system.

According to Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis and Ecob (1988:250-256) an effective school is characterised by parental involvement in helping in the classroom, planning educational visits, attending meetings to discuss learner's progress, parents' reading to their children, and giving them access to books at home with an informal open door policy.

Keith and Girling (1991:176) are of the opinion that in an effective school parental involvement benefits the school in terms of added resources as well as staff renewal and innovation. It helps to build broad-based political support and produces benefits in terms of improved academic achievement.

Dekker and Lemmer (1994:154) suggest that for the school effectiveness, parental involvement is essential in that it is significantly related to:

- improved learner academic achievement,
- improved learner behaviour in school, and
- increased community support for the school, including human, financial and material resources.

2.8 SCHOOL PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Physical infrastructure refers to the concrete institutions of the teaching system particularly in relation to building complexes, sites and their distribution (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein, 1988:493).

According to Badenhorst (1987:113) one of the factors that determines a pleasant feeling of being welcomed that is characteristic of an effective school is its physical environment, which is friendly, with a pleasant and welcoming reception (plants, pictures, carpet, etc.). Offices, classrooms, playgrounds and schoolyards are neat and tastefully decorated.

School buildings and premises are the physical framework within which the system of providing education functions. The planning, design and erection of buildings place an enormous demand on the state or community and should therefore be utilised in a controlled and purposeful manner (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:489).

Lipham and Hoch (1974:305) maintain that the planning and design of school buildings involve certain requirements, that is, to serve its function well, to meet the educational expectations of its learners and community. To be truly great, the school buildings must be more than a container for the educational programme. The school must be a friendly, attractive and stimulating place, possess a feeling of security and show a sense of pride to all whom it serves.

The physical environment in which educators and learners work can and does influence what they do and how they feel, e.g. it can affect their flexibility in teaching and learning, communication patterns, and extent of discipline problems in the school. A well maintained, bright, sparkling, flexible, physical facility suggests a school that people care about (Gorton, 1976:45).

Van der Westhuizen (1991:512) is of the view that the educational utilisation of physical facilities by learners and educators, whether appropriate or not, is important for the school's success. Care should be taken that the facilities are used for the purpose for which they are planned and designed, taking into account the educational criteria and those of reality. This implies that one should keep abreast of education policy, principles and changing needs, and that learners and educators should be informed and guided to make use of the facilities in a responsible and accountable manner.

Everard and Morris (1990:212-219) state that an effective school is characterised by its ability to develop the curriculum in the way that it wishes to achieve its objectives depending on the availability of resources. These resources need to be controlled, which involves:

- ensuring that material resources are actually present by keeping up-to-date inventories which are periodically checked,
- someone should be clearly responsible for the control and maintenance of each piece of equipment, and
- reviewing the use to which resources are being put.

2.9 SCHOOL SAFETY

School safety is one of the guarantees of effective schools (Thurston & Lotto, 1990:177-178). Effective schools are characterised by learning environments that are safe and orderly without being oppressive and by physical environments that are clean and well maintained.

Effective schools ensure that they create consistency and coordinate the school discipline programme; hence the particular rules and approaches to discipline may be less important than the existence of some generally

recognised and accepted set of standards (Rutter, Manghan, Mortimore & Ouston, 1979:121).

A school should be a place where learners can concentrate on their studies without being concerned about issues of discipline, safety and security. Measures need to be implemented to ensure that this is the case (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, (2003:5).

Thurston and Lotto (1990:178) maintain that effective schools' managers and educators work together to ensure that:

- School rules and consequences are clearly defined, communicated, and understood by learners, educators and parents.
- Rules are fairly and consistently enforced.
- Classroom and school rules are integrally connected.
- Model appropriate behaviour by personally enforcing discipline with learners.
- Educators and learners are involved in the development of school rules.
- Secure support for school rules.
- Ensure that all staff members support and enforce discipline procedure.
- Confront problems quickly and forcefully.
- Provide support for the management system.
- Support educators with discipline problems in their classrooms.

2.10 SUMMARY

Schools are established to improve the educational achievement of learners. It is for this reason that schools need to be managed effectively and efficiently by all stakeholders involved. The environment or climate within the school has to be conducive for effective teaching and learning to take place meaningfully.

An effective school is characterised by factors such as a conducive culture and climate of teaching and learning, good leadership, effective professional development, motivated educators, and the ability to manage conflicts. Good organisation and planning, a relevant curriculum, parental and other stakeholders' involvement in the school, adequate physical infrastructure and a safe environment are important aspects for the school to be effective.

CHAPTER 3

PLANNING OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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CHAPTER 3

PLANNING OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter the characteristics of an effective school were delineated by means of literature research. From this literature study it was clear that for the school to achieve its purpose, which is effective teaching and learning, it has to be characterised by certain characteristics.

In order to investigate and verify the findings in the literature review, it was important to undertake an empirical survey. Data was collected through administering a self-structured questionnaire to educators to elicit their perceptions about the characteristics of an effective school.

This chapter will focus on the planning of the empirical research in discussing the questionnaire as research instrument and the processing of the data.

3.2 PERMISSION

With the aim of administering the questionnaire (Annexure B) to educators of schools in the Ethekwini Region it was required to first request permission from the region in writing. Letters to this effect (Annexure A) were drafted and posted to the Secretary of the Department of Education and Culture and to the Director of Education Support Services of the region. This permission was granted on condition that the Senior Education Manager (SEM) for the intended schools is contacted and permission is obtained from the respective principals.

3.3 SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

In order to administer the questionnaire to educators, 20 primary schools in the Ethekwini Region were randomly selected from an alphabetical list of primary schools in the region. The researcher randomly selected 10 educators from each school which constituted a sample of 200 educators. Each school was supplied with 10 questionnaires, a copy of the letter of permission from the Regional Manager of the Ethekwini Region, together with a letter to the principal. One hundred and twenty (120) correctly completed questionnaires were returned reflecting a response rate of 60%.

3.4 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

3.4.1 The questionnaire as research instrument

The questionnaire is a set of questions dealing with some topic or related group of topics, given to a selected group of individuals for the purpose of gathering data on a problem under consideration (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein, 1994:505). According to Van Wyk (1996:30) data is any kind of information that researchers can identify and accumulate to facilitate answers to their queries.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:190) suggest that the questionnaire is a prepared question form submitted to certain persons (respondents) with a view of obtaining information. Within the operational phase of the research process the questionnaire is all-important. Schnetler (1993:77) indicates that the measuring instrument has the greatest influence on the reliability of research data.

The characteristics of measurement are best controlled by the careful construction of the instrument. A well-designed questionnaire is the culmination of a long process of planning the research objectives, formulating the problem and generating the hypothesis. A poorly

designed questionnaire can invalidate any research results, notwithstanding the merits of the sample, the field workers and the statistical techniques (Huysamen, 1989:2). In their criticism of questionnaires Berchie and Anderson (Schnetler, 1993:77) object to poor design rather than to a questionnaire as such. A well-designed questionnaire can boost the reliability and validity of the data to acceptable tolerances (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993:42).

The design of a questionnaire does not take place in a vacuum. According to Dane (1990:315-319) the length of individual questions, the number of response options, as well as the format and the wording of questions are determined by the following:

- The choice of the subject to be researched.
- The aim of the research.
- The size of the research sample.
- The method of data collection.
- The analysis of the data.

Against this background the researcher can now look at the principles that determine whether the questionnaire is well designed or not. It is thus necessary to draw a distinction between questionnaire content, question format, question order, type of questions, formulation of questions and validity and reliability of questions.

3.4.2 Construction of the questionnaire

The researcher considered the following qualities of a questionnaire when it was being designed. Cohen and Manion (1994:94) claim that an ideal questionnaire is clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. Its design must minimise potential errors from respondents and coders. Since respondents' participation in surveys is voluntary, a questionnaire has to help in engaging their interest, encourage their cooperation, and eliciting answers as close as possible to the truth.

The construction of a questionnaire as an activity should not take place in isolation because it is the culmination of a long process of planning the research objective, formulating the problem and generating the hypothesis. The researcher therefore should consult and seek advice from specialists and colleagues at all times during the construction and design stages of the questionnaire (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1988:198).

Questions to be included in the questionnaire were tested on specialists and colleagues as a question may appear correct to the researcher when written down, but can be interpreted differently when asked to another person. Hlatshwayo (1996:149) suggests that a researcher must ensure that adequate time is budgeted for the construction and preliminary testing of the questionnaire. All of the above were taken into consideration by the researcher during the designing of the questionnaire for the investigation.

An important aim in the construction of the questionnaire for this investigation was to present the questions as simple and straightforward as possible. An accompanying letter and instructions were also sent with the questionnaire. The researcher further aimed to avoid ambiguity, vagueness, bias, prejudice and technical language in the questions.

The aim of the questionnaire (Annexure B) was to obtain information regarding educators' perceptions about the characteristics of an effective school. The questionnaire was subdivided into two sections as follows:

- **Section One:** dealt with the biographical information of the respondents and consisted of questions 1.1 to 1.8.
- **Section Two:** focused on educators' perceptions of the characteristics of an effective school. In this section respondents were requested to indicate their perceptions of an effective school in three ways, namely agree, disagree and uncertain.

3.4.3 Characteristics of a good questionnaire

In evaluating the literature studies on questionnaire design in the educational field of authors such as Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:190), Norval (1988:60) and Mahlangu (1987:84-85) the characteristics of a good questionnaire could be summarised, *inter alia*, as follows:

- It has to deal with a significant topic, one which the respondent will recognise as important enough to warrant spending his time on. The significance should be clearly and carefully stated on the questionnaire and in the accompanying letter.
- It seeks only that information which cannot be obtained from other sources.
- It must be as short as possible, but long enough to obtain the essential data. Long questionnaires frequently find their way into the wastepaper basket.
- Questionnaires should be attractive in appearance, neatly arranged and clearly duplicated or printed.
- Directions for a good questionnaire are clear and complete, and important terms clearly defined.
- Each question should deal with a single concept and be worded as simply and straightforwardly as possible.
- Different categories should provide an opportunity for easy, accurate and unambiguous responses.

- Objectively formulated questions with no leading suggestions should render the desired responses. Leading questions are just as inappropriate in a questionnaire as they are in a court of law.

Questions should be presented in a proper psychological order, proceeding from general to more specific and sensitive responses. An orderly grouping helps respondents to organise their own thinking so that their answers are logical and objective. It is preferable to present questions that create a favourable attitude before proceeding to those that are more intimate or delicate in nature. Annoying and/or embarrassing questions should be avoided if possible.

3.4.4 Advantages and disadvantages of the written questionnaire

(1) Advantages of a written questionnaire

According to Labuschagne (2001:58) the questionnaire as a research instrument to obtain information has the following advantages:

- The primary advantage is that a written questionnaire is the least expensive method of obtaining data. By using electronic technology, the cost factor could be reduced even further.
- Possible interviewer bias can be precluded. Using the written questionnaire, the possibility of respondents being influenced by factors such as the interviewer's experience and interaction with the respondent by asking leading and probing questions, is eliminated completely resulting in honest responses from the respondents.
- A questionnaire ensures anonymity of the respondent, especially if the questionnaire is arranged in such a manner that the responses given are representative of the beliefs, feelings, opinions or perceptions of the respondents without being identified. It will also increase the return rate of the questionnaires.

- The respondent has time to reflect on the questions before giving answers without being pressurised to give answers. Own/personal time in a more relaxed atmosphere is used to complete the questionnaire.
- With the written questionnaire, a large sample population can be reached.
- Standard questions and instructions are given. The more instructions are repeated to assist the respondent, the more accurate the responses will be from all the respondents.
- Information obtained through a written questionnaire is more readily transferable for analysis and interpretation than information obtained through personal interviews.
- Through written questionnaires any possibility of interviewer errors (which could lead to incorrect interpretation of data, thereby undermining the reliability of data) are avoided.
- The respondent in a private environment rather than in the presence of an interviewer would answer questions of a more personal, or an embarrassing nature, more readily.
- Questions that require more time for consideration and possibly consulting with resource materials, would be answered more readily on a written questionnaire than when the respondent is 'confronted' by an interviewer.
- Questionnaires can obtain information that is not always possible through other sources.

- The administering, coding, analysis and interpretation of data can be done without much training or experience if the basic guidelines are followed.

(2) Disadvantages of a written questionnaire

The written questionnaire also has significant disadvantages. According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:190), Mahlangu (1987:84-85) and Kidder and Judd (1986:223-224) the disadvantages of the questionnaire are, *inter alia*, the following:

- Questionnaires do not provide flexibility of interviews. In an interview an idea or comment can be explored. This makes it possible to gauge how people are interpreting the question. If respondents interpret questions asked differently the validity of information obtained is jeopardised.
- People are generally better able to express their views verbally than in writing.
- Questions can be answered only when they are sufficiently easy and straightforward to be understood with the given instructions and definitions.
- The mail questionnaire does not make provision for obtaining the views of more than one person at a time. It requires uninfluenced views of one person only.
- Answers to mail questionnaires must be seen as final. Rechecking of responses cannot be done. There is no chance of investigating beyond the given answers for a clarification of ambiguous answers. If respondents are unwilling to answer certain questions nothing can be done about it because the mail questionnaire is essentially inflexible.

- In a mail questionnaire the respondent examines all the questions at the same time before answering them and the answers to the different questions can therefore not be treated as “independent”.
- Researchers are unable to control the context of question answering, and specifically, the presence of other people. Respondents may ask friends or family members to examine the questionnaire or comment on their answers, causing bias if the respondent's own private opinions are desired.
- Written questionnaires do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstandings or answer questions that the respondents may have. Respondents might answer questions incorrectly or not at all due to confusion or misinterpretation.

3.4.5 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

There are two concepts that are of critical importance in understanding issues of measurement in social science research, namely validity and reliability (Huysamen, 1989:1-3). Cooper (1989:15) is of the opinion that questionnaire designers all too rarely deal consciously with the degree of validity and reliability of their instrument, which is one reason why so many questionnaires are lacking in these two qualities. Questionnaires have a very limited purpose and are often used only as one-time data gathering devices with a very short life, administered to a limited population. There are ways to improve both the validity and reliability of questionnaires. Basic to the validity of a questionnaire is asking the right questions phrased in the least ambiguous way. In other words, do the items sample a significant aspect of the purpose of the investigation? Terms must be clearly defined so that they have the same meaning to all respondents (Cohen & Manion, 1989:111-112; Cooper, 1989:60-62). According to Kidder and Judd (1989:53), although reliability and validity are two different characteristics of measurement, they “shade into each other”. They are two ends of a continuum but at points in the middle it is

difficult to distinguish between them. Validity and reliability are especially important in educational research because most of the measurements attempted in this area are obtained indirectly.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:198) are of the opinion that researchers can never guarantee that an educational or psychological measuring instrument measures precisely and dependably what it is intended to measure. It is essential, therefore, to assess the validity and reliability of these instruments. An educational researcher is expected to include in his research report an account of the validity and reliability of the instrument he has employed. Researchers must therefore have a general knowledge as to what validity and reliability are and how one goes about validating a research instrument and establishing its reliability (Huysamen, 1989:1-3).

(1) Validity of the questionnaire

Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:560) define validity as the extent to which a measuring instrument satisfies the purpose for which it was constructed. It also refers to the extent to which it correlates with some criterion external to the instrument itself. Validity is that quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to determine what it was designed to determine. In general terms validity refers to the degree to which an instrument succeeds in measuring what it has set out to measure. Behr (1988:122) regards validity as an indispensable characteristic of measuring devices.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:2370, Mulder (1989:215-217) and Dane (1990:257-258) distinguish between three different types of validity:

- Content validity, where content and cognitive processes can be measured. Topics, skills and abilities should be prepared and items from each category randomly drawn.

- Criterion validity, which refers to the relationship between scores on a measuring instrument and an independent variable (criterion), believed to measure directly the behaviour or characteristic in question. The criterion should be relevant, reliable and free from bias and contamination.
- Construct validity, where the extent to which the test measures a specific trait or construct is concerned, for example ability, intelligence, attitudes, reasoning, etc.

The validity of the questionnaire indicates how worthwhile an instrument is likely to be in a given situation. Validity shows whether the instrument is reflecting the true story, or at least something approximating the truth. A valid research instrument is one that has demonstrated that it detects some "real" ability, attitude, or prevailing situation that the researcher can identify and characterise (Schnetler, 1993:71). If the ability or attribute is itself stable, and if a respondent's answers to the items are not affected by other unpredictable factors, then each administration of the instrument should yield essentially the same results (Dane, 1990:158).

The validity of the questionnaire as a research instrument reflects the sureness with which conclusions can be drawn. It refers to the extent to which interpretations of the instrument's results, other than the ones the researcher wishes to make, can be ruled out. Establishing validity requires that the researcher anticipates the potential arguments that sceptics might use to dismiss the research results (Cooper, 1989:120; Dane, 1990:148-149).

The researcher employed the questionnaire as an indirect method to measure educators' perceptions of the characteristics of an effective school. Due to the complexity of the respondents' attributes one is never sure that the questionnaire devised will actually measure what it purports to measure. Items in the questionnaire cannot be measured like mass, length, size or height. From the interpretation of the results obtained and

the sureness with which conclusions could be drawn the researcher is convinced that the questionnaire, to a great extent, did measure that which it was designed for.

(2) Reliability of the questionnaire

Mulder (1989:209) and Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1988:512) concur that reliability is a statistical concept and relates to consistency of obtaining the same relative answer when measuring phenomena that have not changed. A reliable measuring instrument is one that, if repeated under similar conditions, would present the same result or a near approximation of the initial result. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:194) and Kidder and Judd (1986:47-48) distinguish between the following types of reliability:

- Test-retest reliability (coefficient of stability) – consistency estimated by comparing two or more repeated administrations of the measuring instrument.
- Internal consistency reliability. This indicates how well the test items measure the same thing.
- Split-half reliability. By correlating the results obtained from two halves of the same measuring instrument, the split-half reliability can be calculated.

In essence, reliability refers to consistency but consistency does not guarantee truthfulness. The reliability of the question is no proof that the answers given reflect the respondents' true feelings (Dane, 1990:256). A demonstration of reliability is necessary but not conclusive evidence that an instrument is valid. Reliability refers to the extent to which measurement results are free of unpredictable kinds of error. Sources of error that affect reliability are, *inter alia*, the following (Mulder, 1989:209; Kidder & Judd, 1986:45):

- Fluctuations in the mood or alertness of the respondents because of fatigue, illness, recent good or bad experiences, or temporary differences amongst members of the group being measured.
- Variations in the conditions of administration between groups. These range from various distractions, such as unusual outside noise to inconsistencies in the administration of the measuring instrument such as omissions in verbal instructions.
- Differences in scoring or interpretation of results, change differences in what the observer notices and errors in computing scores.
- Random effects by respondents who guess or check off attitude alternatives without trying to understand them.

When the questionnaire is an empirical research instrument, there is no specific method, for example the 'test-retest' method, to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Therefore it will be difficult to establish to what extent the answers of the respondents were reliable. The researcher, however, believes that the questionnaires in this investigation were completed with the necessary honesty and sincerity required to render the maximum possible reliability. Frankness in responding the questions was made possible by the anonymity of the questionnaire. In the coding of the questions it was evident that the questionnaires were completed with the necessary dedication.

3.5 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practises or tests the procedures to be used in the subsequent full-scale project (Dane, 1990:42). The pilot is a preliminary or 'trial-run' investigation using similar questions and similar subjects as in the final survey. Kidder and Judd (1986:211-212) state that the basic purpose of a pilot study is to determine how the design of the

subsequent study can be improved and to identify flaws in the measuring instrument. A pilot study gives the researcher an idea of what the method will actually look like in operation and what effects (intended or not) it is likely to have. In other words by generating many of the practical problems that will ultimately arise, a pilot study enables the researcher to avert these problems by changing procedures, instructions and questions.

The number of participants in the pilot study or group is normally smaller than the number scheduled to take part in the final survey. Participants in the pilot study and the sample for the final study must be selected from the same target population. For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted a pilot run on colleagues of a nearby school.

According to Plug, Meyer, Louw and Gouws (1991:49-66), the following are the purposes of a pilot study, and these also correlate with the aims of the researcher in this survey:

- It permits a preliminary testing of the hypothesis that leads to testing more precise hypothesis in the main study.
- It provides the researcher with ideas, approaches and clues not foreseen prior to the pilot study.
- It permits a thorough check of the planned statistical and analytical procedures, thus allowing an appraisal of their adequacy in treating the data.
- It greatly reduces the number of treatment errors because unforeseen problems revealed in the pilot study results in redesigning the main study.
- It saves the researcher major expenditure of time and money on aspects of the research that would have been unnecessary.

- Feedback from other persons involved is made possible and leads to important improvements in the main study.
- The approximate time required to complete the questionnaire is established in the pilot study.
- Questions and/or instructions that were misinterpreted are reformulated.

Through the use of a pilot study as “pre-test” the researcher was satisfied that the questions asked complied adequately with the requirements of the study.

3.6 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

If properly administered the questionnaire is the best available instrument for obtaining information from widespread sources or large groups simultaneously (Cooper, 1989:39). The researcher personally delivered questionnaires to the selected schools and collected them after completion (cf. 3.3).

3.7 THE PROCESSING OF THE DATA

Once data was collected, it was captured in a format that would permit analysis and interpretation. This involved the careful coding of the 120 questionnaires completed by the educators. The coded data was subsequently transferred onto a computer spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel in Office 2000. The coded data was analysed using the same programme in order to interpret the results by means of descriptive statistics.

3.7.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics serve to describe and summarise observations (Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein, 1994:355). Frequency tables, histograms and polygons are useful in forming impressions about the distribution of data.

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:65-76) frequency distribution is a method to organise data obtained from questionnaires to simplify statistical analysis. A frequency table provides the following information:

- It indicates how many times a particular response appears on the completed questionnaires.
- It provides percentages that reflect the number of responses to a certain question in relation to the total number of responses.
- The arithmetic mean (average) can be calculated by adding all the scores and dividing it by the number of scores.

3.7.2 Application of data

The questionnaire (Annexure B) was designed to determine educators' perceptions about the characteristics of an effective school. In order to obtain the information needed for the purpose of this study, the questionnaire was subdivided into two sections:

- Section 1 required demographic information about the educators and included items 1.1 to 1.8.
- Section 2 focused on the information regarding educators' perceptions of an effective school.

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

This investigation was constrained by a number of factors. The following are likely factors that might have influenced the reliability and validity of the questionnaire:

- Although anonymity was required in the questionnaire the possibility exists that because of educators' cautiousness, they might not have been frank and truthful in their responses.
- The sensitive nature of items in the questionnaire might have elicited false or misleading responses and influenced the reliability of the results.
- To restrict the investigation to manageable proportions, the researcher limited the study to educators in the Ethekwini Region of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Questions were formulated in English, which is not the mother tongue of most of the respondents, which might have resulted in the misinterpretation of questions, and consequently incorrect responses.

3.9 SUMMARY

The research design, which was applied in the empirical investigation, was discussed in this chapter. The questionnaire as research instrument was also comprehensively described. The data obtained from the completed questionnaires will be analysed and presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

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CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data which was collected from the completed questionnaires will be analysed, findings will be interpreted and some comments will be presented. The data comprises biographical information of the respondents (educators) and their perceptions of the characteristics of an effective school. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were completed by educators (cf. 3.3).

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:59) the descriptive method in research seeks to describe the situation as it is, thus there are no interventions on the part of the researcher and therefore no control. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:42) state that the purpose of research is to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person. Descriptive research is one of the methods of research used to study a person or persons scientifically in the educational situation. According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:355) descriptive studies find distribution of variables rather than set out with the idea of testing hypotheses about relationships. In this study homothetic descriptive research was employed with the aim of describing educators' perceptions pertaining what characterises an effective school. The research was primarily concerned with the nature and degree of existing situations in schools.

4.2.1 Gender of respondents

Table 1: Frequency distribution according to the gender of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	23	19%
Female	97	81%
Total	120	100%

Table 1 shows that in the research sample there are 62% more female educators than males. According to Austen (1993:5) the majority of the teaching corps in South African schools consists of female educators. Statistical data of the department of education indicates that seventy percent (70%) of the teaching staff at schools are females (Chetty, 1997:119).

4.2.2 Age of respondents

Table 2: Frequency distribution according to the age of the respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
26 – 30 years	5	4%
31 – 35 years	20	17%
36 – 40 years	34	28%
41 – 45 years	24	20%
46 – 50 years	24	20%
51 – 55 years	9	8%
56 – 60 years	4	3%
Total	120	100%

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents (28%) who participated in the age group 36 to 40 years while (45%) of the respondents are between 31 and 40 years old. Younger educators have more to offer in terms of energy and productivity in the teaching profession. The possibility also exists that the younger the educator, the longer he may stay in the education profession and thus gain more experience. However, only a very small percentage (4%) of the respondents in the research sample is younger than 30 years. According to Van der Merwe (1993:261) the following are possible factors contributing to the latter finding:

- The salaries of educators do not compare favourably with that from the private sector.
- Rationalisation and redeployment of educators do not offer much confidence in the teaching profession as a permanent, substantive profession.
- Prospective students in the teaching profession are frightened off by the increasing workload of educators as perceived by them.

4.2.3 Home language of respondents

Table 3 Frequency distribution according to the home language of the respondents

Language	Frequency	Percentage
English	2	2%
Zulu	115	96%
Other	3	2%
Total	120	100%

The findings in Table 3 were expected because the research sample was randomly selected from schools in Zulu communities.

4.2.4 Post level of respondents

Table 4: Frequency distribution according to the post level of the respondents

Post level	Frequency	Percentage
Principal	2	2%
Deputy principal	7	6%
HOD	16	13%
Educator (Post level 1)	95	79%
Total	120	100%

The findings in Table 4 were expected and are in accordance with the post structures in schools.

4.2.5 Years of teaching experience

Table 5: Frequency distribution according to respondents' years of completed service as educators

Completed years of service	Frequency	Percentage
0 – 5 years	17	14%
6 – 10 years	25	21%
11 – 15 years	35	29%
16 – 20 years	19	16%
21 – 25 years	13	11
26 – 30 years	7	6%
30 years	4	3%
Total	120	100%

Table 5 reveals that eighty percent (80%) of the respondents in the research sample have less than 20 years' teaching experience, while only twenty (20%) have more than 20 years of teaching experience. This low percentage can be attributed to the fact that many senior educators leave the profession for different reasons, e.g. early retirement, voluntary severance packages or attrition.

4.2.6 Years in current school

Table 6: Frequency distribution according to the number of years the respondents have taught at their current schools

Years in current school	Frequency	Percentage
9 – 5 years	40	33%
6 – 10 years	28	23%
11 – 15 years	18	15%
16 – 20 years	34	28%
Total	120	100%

Table 6 shows that most of the respondents are teaching at their current schools for 5 years or less. Possible reasons for this finding might be the following:

- The rationalisation and redeployment of educators by the department.
- Promotion of educators.
- New educators who only started their teaching career.

4.2.7 Qualification of respondents

Table 7: Frequency distribution according to the qualification of the respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Degree and diploma or certificate	46	38%
Degree only	4	4%
Diploma and/or certificate only	70	58%
Total	120	100%

From Table 7 it emerges that the smaller percentage (38%) of the respondents in the research sample possesses academic and professional qualifications, which are by many perceived as being better qualified for the teaching profession. The contents (curricula) of teaching diplomas and certificates are more practical than theoretically orientated courses and therefore more appropriate for teaching learners in the lower grades. In order to be an effective educator a person should have obtained the most suitable qualifications. Effective schools are characterised by adequately qualified educators.

4.2.8 Leadership and management

Table 8: Frequency distribution according to the respondents' perceptions of the leadership and management requirements for an effective school n = 20

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
	For a school to be effective the principal must:				
2.1	Create a culture of teaching and learning through his/her management style	100 90%	8 7%	4 3%	120 100%
2.2	Have the abilities to be an effective educational manager	117 98%	1 1%	2 1%	120 100%
2.3	Plan activities well in advance (e.g. academic, cultural and sporting activities)	110 92%	9 7%	1 1%	120 100%
2.4	Implement an effective disciplinary policy	113 94%	4 3%	3 3%	120 100%
2.5	Have the ability to successfully resolve conflict situations	120 100%	04 0%	0 01%	120 100%
2.6	Be democratic in his/her management style	109 91%	8 7%	3 2%	120 100%
2.7	Have good communication skills	118 98%	1 1%	1 1%	120 100%
2.8	Provide opportunities for staff development	118 98%	1 1%	1 1%	120 100%
2.9	Be capable of handling stressful situations effectively	112 93%	7 6%	1 1%	120 100%
2.10	Not be absent from school without a valid reason	112 93%	5 4%	3 3%	120 100%
2.11	Not allow his/her domestic (private) life to affect his/her professional life	110 92%	5 4%	4 3%	120 100%
2.12	Admit to mistakes he/she has made	109 91%	6 5%	5 4%	120 100%
2.13	Ensure that staff members know exactly what is expected of them	118 98%	2 2%	0 0%	120 100%
2.14	Empower staff members through delegation of tasks	117 98%	3 2%	0 0%	120 100%
2.15	Allow staff to take part in decision-making	113 94%	7 6%	0 0%	120 100%

According to the frequency of the responses in Table 8 the majority of respondents were in agreement with the leadership and management requirements for an effective school. The findings in Table 8 are substantiated by the responses to the following statements:

A culture of teaching and learning (2.1): Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents agreed that for a school to be effective the principal must create a culture of teaching and learning. Shah (1994:168) maintains that the creation of a climate conducive to teaching and learning is one of the responsibilities of the school principal. Basson, Van der Westhuizen & Nieman (1991:4) points out that creating and maintaining a culture of teaching and learning does not involve a single action but various management laws come into effect. This indicates that the principal, together with the members of the school management team, should continually make decisions, solve problems, coordinate, delegate, motivate, communicate, evaluate and act correctively (Basson, Van der Westhuizen & Nieman, 1991:634).

Educational manager (2.2): Van der Westhuizen (1995:554) describes an effective school principal as a mentor, a role model and a central figure who has the most influence in the school. The majority of respondents (98%) agreed that a school can only be effective if the principal has the ability to be an effective educational manager. Wynn and Gutitus (1984:629) state that an effective school is characterised by the principal, who as an educational leader takes responsibility for the effective implementation of educational policies (national and provincial). Squelch (1994:7) maintains that a school policy provides the road guidelines according to which the school should operate effectively.

Planning activities (2.3): In a school that functions effectively all school activities will be planned well in advance (Musaazi, 1992:119). Ninety-two percent (92%) of the respondents agreed that the effectiveness of a school depends on the planning of activities well in advance. Kroon (1990:110) maintains that planning is the management

team's task which concerns the purposeful reflection on future goals and objectives in a school. According to Blandford (1998:153) planning involves, *inter alia*, the following:

- Day-to-day planning and diary keeping.
- Delegating duties to management and educators.
- Setting objectives and achievement of goals.

Disciplinary policy (2.4): The purpose of a disciplinary policy is to promote good behaviour among learners. An orderly environment, characterised by discipline and good behaviour, is essential for the effective functioning of a school. The latter can only be achieved by the implementation of an effective disciplinary policy as indicated by 94% of the respondents in the research sample. The principal, with the assistance of the school management team should be responsible for a well structured disciplinary policy or code of conduct for learners which are a prerequisite for the success of the school's curricular and extracurricular programmes. Kruger (1996:6) says the principal must see to it that an effective school disciplinary policy is in place so that a habitable and safe school environment is created for the learners.

Resolve conflict situations (2.5): One hundred percent (100%) of the respondents agreed that for a school to be effective, the principal must be able to resolve conflict situations. Le Roux (1992:6) states that school principals should have the power to put an end to conflict, to decrease tension and gain the cooperation of staff members, through the exercising of interpersonal communication. De Witt (1993:2) confirms that conflict is endemic wherever people with different natures work together. The handling of all kinds of friction, including major conflict among teaching staff is one of the key functions of principals. Consequently, unless school principals are well versed in the art of resolving conflict effectively they cannot do justice to the key position they hold (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:302).

Democratic management style (2.6): More than ninety percent (91%) of the respondents said that for a school to function effectively, the principal must be democratic in his management style. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:159) describe democratic as a participatory, consultative, negotiating and inclusive style of leadership. Heron (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997) maintains that in an effectively and democratically run school, directiveness is an essential aspect. He says the principal in an effective school:

- Needs to be a directive leader at appropriate times and in appropriate ways.
- Must consult and negotiate at times when it is absolutely necessary to do so.
- Needs to know when to delegate authority so that they do not hold the reins of power unilaterally or in unchecked fashion.

Hargreaves and Hopkins (1992:20) state that a democratic leader values the contributions of colleagues and will not feel threatened by their ideas or complaints.

Communication skills (2.7): Nearly all the respondents (98%) indicated that a principal must have good communication skills to be the educational leader of an effective school. Badenhorst (1995:25) states that communication is what enables the school as an organisation to work towards its goals. Communication in a school is the process of exchanging information, beliefs and feelings between the principal and staff members (Wynn & Gutitus, 1984:89).

Staff development (2.8): The majority (98%) of the respondents in the research sample agreed that for a school to be effective the principal must provide opportunities for staff development. Musaazi (1982:194-195) refers to educators' development as the provisions made by

education authorities, including principals, to improve the performance of educators from initial employment to retirement. Since educators form part of a dynamic profession, they must be kept abreast of improvements in the teaching methods.

Stressful situations (2.9): Most of the respondents (93%) said that the principal must be capable of handling stressful situations for a school to function effectively. Wynn and Gutitus (1984:34) state that effective leadership requires the principals' ability to offer creative solutions to emerging problems and to establish a climate conducive to the development of creative potentials of educators.

Absence from school (2.10): For a school to be effective the principal must not be absent from school without a valid reason. Most of the respondents (93%) were in agreement with the statement. When educators encounter problems, the principal must be readily available and willing to intervene with a view of solving these problems (Dunham, 1989:12). The principal must be a role model in school attendance.

Domestic (private) life versus profession life (2.11): A very large percentage of respondents (92%) agreed that the principal should be able to separate his personal life from his professional life. According to Dunham (1989:102) one of the strategies of coping with personal stress is to keep home and work matters separately. It is important to work in such a manner so that unnecessary stress does not build up.

Admitting to mistakes (2.12): According to Shah (1994:21) most people find it difficult to admit to mistakes. However, the larger number of respondents (91%) said that in an effective functioning school a principal must admit to mistakes he has made. The principal can also make wrong decisions. He should therefore rise above the problem and turn poor decisions into creative situations. The creative principal would be able to view setbacks and mistakes as areas where lessons could be learnt for greater achievements (Losoncy, 1995:4).

Expectations from staff (2.13): Close to one hundred percent (98%) of respondents said that in an effective school the principal must ensure that members know exactly what is expected of them. According to Gorton and Snowden (1993:113) one of the major elements of an effective principal is that of a consistently applied set of expectations that stresses the importance of staff members striving for excellence and learners performing up to their potential. When an educator is aware of what is expected of him, he would know where he fits in the overall structure of the school (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:227).

Staff empowerment through delegation (2.14): The principal cannot perform all the tasks necessary for control; he delegates some of these to his subordinates, but nevertheless remains in a position of responsibility (Badenhorst, 1995:36-37). The majority of respondents (98%) agreed that the principal should delegate some of his tasks and thus empowering other staff members. If delegation is done properly, staff members may begin to feel that they are valued and competent.

Decision-making (2.15): Staff members who are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process show more enthusiasm for their jobs and are creative as they now have co-ownership (Sergiovanni, 1990:10). The majority of respondents (94%) in the research sample agreed that principals should allow them to take part in decision-making process. To motivate educators it is important that they are actively involved in all schools' decision-making processes.

4.2.9 Motivation

Table 9: Frequency distribution according to educators' perceptions of the factors that motivate educators

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
	A school can only be effective when educators are motivated by, <i>inter alia</i>, the following:				
3.1	An induction programme for new educators	108 90%	4 3%	8 7%	120 100%
3.2	A mentor programme for first-time educators	103 86%	7 6%	10 8%	120 100%
3.3	Setting of well defined levels for staff performance	107 89%	2 2%	11 9%	120 100%
3.4	Involving educators in decision-making	114 95%	4 3%	2 2%	120 100%
3.5	Being informed about effective educational methods	116 96%	2 2%	2 2%	120 100%
3.6	Updating educators on new teaching methods	116 96%	1 1%	3 3%	120 100%
3.7	Receiving praise for work well done	117 97%	2 2%	1 1%	120 100%
3.8	Opportunities to develop their professional skills	119 99%	1 1%	0 0%	120 100%
3.9	Effective guidance from the school management team	115 95%	3 3%	2 2%	120 100%
3.10	Being involved in all the school's activities	94 78%	12 10%	14 12%	120 100%
3.11	Receiving empathy from the management team	102 85%	7 6%	11 9%	120 100%
3.12	Educators receiving moral support when needed	117 98%	0 0%	3 2%	120 100%
3.13	Offering constructible criticism about unsatisfactory work	110 92%	6 5%	4 3%	120 100%
3.14	Suggestions made by educators are considered by the principal	111 92%	6 5%	3 3%	120 100%
3.15	Being informed timeously of matters concerning them	116 92%	1 1%	3 3%	120 100%

Table 9 reflects that most of the respondents were in agreement with the statements concerning the factors that motivate educators. In the

education situation motivation includes factors that closely affect the educators' performance of work and thus the overall efficiency of the school (Musaazi, 1982:43).

Induction programme (3.1): The majority of respondents (90%) agreed that an induction programme for new educators will motivate them to do their best and thus contribute to the effectiveness of the school. Castetter (1992:186) describes staff induction as a systematic organisational effort to assist personnel to adjust readily and effectively to new assignments so that they can contribute maximally to work of the system while realising personnel and position satisfaction. If effectively planned and implemented, a staff induction programme serves the following basis purposes (Web, Montello & Norton, 1994:220):

- Integrates effectively and efficiently new and experienced staff into their respective roles in the school system.
- Reduces and/or removes problems and conditions that tend to inhibit personal effectiveness and job satisfaction.
- Acquaints personnel with the important considerations of personal, professional and community relationships within the school community.
- Provides information and services that promote teaching and learning.

Mentor programmes (3.2): More than eighty percent (86%) of the respondents in the research sample said that a mentor programme for first-time educators is important for them to adjust to their new school environment. Jones and Walters (1994:141) suggest that one approach that should improve the transfer of experience and skills from smarter and experienced educators to novices or first-timers is a mentoring-beginning teacher relationship. Mentors are the key to successful work-

based learning because they help to organise a beginner teacher's needs and advise about learning resources to meet those needs (Finn, 1993:151).

Staff performance (3.3): Most respondents (89%) agreed that setting well defined levels for staff performance helps educators to do their work accordingly. Bondesio and De Witt (1991:253) state that staff members should have clear guidelines on what is expected of them with regard to the subjects they teach; this includes preparation, presentation and control. Catron and Allen (1993:176) say that when principals set realistic levels of performance, educators will display more confidence and perseverance in trying to achieve these performance levels.

Decision-making (3.4): The majority of respondents (95%) indicated that all educators should be involved where decisions about the school are taken. According to Sergiovanni (1990:10) staff members who are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process show more enthusiasm for their jobs and are creative as they now have co-ownership. Decision-making is central and important in the school's administrative functioning (Wynn & Gutitus, 1984:122). Educators feel recognised and important in the school if they are consulted regarding decision-making in the school and thus become motivated.

Effective educational methods (3.5): A larger percentage of respondents in the research sample (96%) confirmed that getting informed about effective educational methods boost their level of confidence and motivates them. No pre-service training programmes or methods prepare staff members for a lifetime in a school. School management teams therefore face the important challenge of implementing effective educational methods that will help their educators to update their skills and methods, and increase their effectiveness on the teaching profession (Guthrie & Reed, 1986:214).

New Teaching methods (3.6): Educators are part of a dynamic profession; they must be kept abreast of developments and improvements in teaching methods (Musaazi, 1982:194-195). It is therefore not surprising that (96%) of the respondents in the research sample agreed that educators should be updated on new teaching methods. One of the most effective ways to bring about curriculum change, teaching improvements, and professional growth and development of educators is through well organised in-service programmes. These in-service programmes should focus on the latest development in teaching methods.

Praising educators (3.7): Motivation is a factor which closely affects the performance of work and the overall efficiency of the school. The majority of respondents in the research sample (97%) are of the opinion that they must be praised and encouraged to boost their self-confidence and esteem. This in turn will motivate them to strive for higher standards for themselves and learners. An effective leader builds a motivated team by being a positive influence and recognises the good work of the individuals and the group (Losoncy, 1995:14). Educators perform a meaningful task and their skills and knowledge are important to the school. Principals must let staff members know their contribution is a valuable function. This will in turn motivate educators to perform optimally and also promote cooperation (Langa, 1993:21).

Professional skills (3.8): Almost all the respondents in the research sample (99%) agreed that educators need to be afforded an opportunity to develop their professional skills. Guthrie and Reed (1986:321) regard development of skills as an investment in human capital. The dividends yielded include a more effective school and therefore improved learner achievements, greater personnel satisfaction and higher morale.

Guidance (3.9): The majority of respondents in the research sample (95%) felt that they need guidance from their school management team to be motivated and more effective in their work. Owing to the complex

nature of the principal's job, he is not always in a position to provide continuous assistance and guidance to educators. It is therefore important for him to ensure that his management team and other senior educators take the responsibility for the guidance and development of other educators (Theron & Bothma, 1990:96). According to McCallum (1995:19) an effective school management team seeks to:

- Empower individuals to make decisions.
- Foster an atmosphere of trust and risk-taking.
- Accord due process to all.
- Communicate openly and honestly.
- Achieve consensus in decision-making.
- Provide adequate information for decision-making.

Educator involvement (3.10): More than three quarters of the respondents (78%) agreed that getting involved in school activities motivates them. Continued dedicated cooperation on the part of the entire staff is ensured when educators are provided with opportunities to develop professionally (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:273). If educators are involved through delegated tasks and involvement in decision-making, their levels of confidence is boosted. No matter how effective a principal is as an individual, he is capable of very little without a supportive, competent and involved staff (Kruger, 1996:2-7).

Empathy (3.11): A school management team which is sensitive and understanding to educators earns their respect and trust. Most respondents in the research sample (85%) agreed that for the effectiveness of the school they need empathy from the school management team. According to Van der Westhuizen (1991:296) for an educational leader to fulfil his function effectively he should have extensive knowledge of human needs and how to satisfy them. This requires the school management team to be sympathetic, caring and also understand people better and handle them better. This would in turn motivate educators, thus raising and maintaining staff morale.

Moral support (3.12): The majority of respondents (98%) in the research sample agreed that getting moral support from the school management team motivates them. According to Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995:61) educators who get moral support from their school management team are motivated and therefore are:

- conscious about the quality of their work;
- bond of their work and accomplishment;
- highly productive; and
- look for alternative ways of solving problems.

Constructive criticism (3.13): Most respondents (92%) in the research sample agreed that constructive criticism motivates them and boosts their morale. Healthy and positive criticism enhances educators' will to perform better and achieve specific goals through purposeful action (Van Rooyen, 1993:87). Constructive criticism enables educators to become more effective and improve the quality of teaching in general. The school management team must ensure that the criticism is constructive and remember that the main purpose of criticism is to help the educator to improve his performance (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994:124).

Ability to listen (3.14): Losoncy (1995:74) states that the main ingredient required by the school management to motivate and encourage staff is the ability and willingness to listen to staff members. The majority of respondents (92) agreed that being listened to by management motivates them to contribute meaningfully to the school effectiveness. Shah (1994:11) maintains that an attentive, caring and understanding school management wins the confidence of staff members.

Informing staff (3.15): The majority of respondents (92%) agreed that getting information timeously about new developments in education matters contributes to the school effectiveness. Effective communication by the school management team depends on the sharing of knowledge

and information timeously with educators so that they are immediately informed of any new development in the school or education system in order to be progressive.

4.2.10 Parental involvement

Table 10: Frequency distribution according to the respondents' perceptions of parental involvement in an effective school

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	TOTAL
In an effective school:					
4.1	Enough competent parents must readily avail themselves for election to the governing body	116 96%	3 3%	1 1%	120 100%
4.2	The majority of parents must attend meetings to elect governors	112 93%	7 6%	1 1%	120 100%
4.3	Parent governors must attend meetings regularly	113 94%	4 3%	3 3%	120 100%
4.4	The majority of parents should attend parents' evenings	97 81%	16 13%	7 6%	120 100%
4.5	Meeting where decisions are made must be well attended by parents	117 97%	2 2%	1 1%	120 100%
4.6	The majority of parents must honour the payment of prescribed school fees	107 89%	8 7%	5 4%	120 100%
4.7	All parents should respond to circulars / notices from the school	101 84%	13 11%	6 5%	120 100%
4.8	All parents should support the implementation of a code of conduct for learners	118 98%	2 2%	0 0%	120 100%
Parents must:					
4.9	Actively support their children's school activities (e.g. sport, cultural activities)	119 99%	1 1%	0 0%	120 100%
4.10	Assist their children with their schoolwork	119 99%	1 1%	0 0%	120 100%
4.11	Consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress	12- 100%	0 0%	0 0%	120 100%
4.12	Be involved in the fundraising activities of the school	111 92%	2 2%	7 6%	120 100%
4.13	Volunteer their services in the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds	118 98%	1 1%	1 1%	120 100%
4.14	Be willing to supervise classes when educators are absent	105 87%	7 6%	8 7%	120 100%
4.15	Be willing to assist with sport and/or other cultural events	112 93%	2 2%	6 5%	120 100%

Table 10 shows that the majority of respondents in the research sample agreed that accountable parental involvement is one of the prerequisites for an effective school. Smith (1982:109) maintains that the best curriculum, facilities and educators in the world will be of no avail unless the investors (parents) are clearly seen as the *raison d'être* of the whole process of formal schooling.

Governing body (4.1): The majority of respondents (96%) in the research sample agreed that for a school to function effectively, parents must be elected to the governing body of the school. Van Schalkwyk (1997:151) states that competent parents must be elected for specific tasks in the school governing body through identifying each parent's knowledge, experience and competence. The governing body is the guardian of the school and given the extremely important role and function that governing bodies must play in schools, it is vital that these bodies have the capacity to provide leadership and management for the school and its community (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997:165).

Governing body elections (4.2): More than ninety percent (93%) of the respondents in the research sample agreed that the majority of parents must attend meetings where school governing body members are elected. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:151) strongly support the idea that all the parents of the school attend elections to determine each one's qualities since the governing body of the school is the legal body responsible for the development of overall school policy, the vision and mission of the school, financial management and fundraising.

Attendance of meetings (4.3): The majority of respondents (94%) agreed that parent governors should attend meetings regularly. This helps with continuity, by regularly attending meetings, members are kept at the same level of understanding the schools or governing body's matters.

Parents' evenings (4.4): A large percentage of the respondents (81%) agreed that parents must attend parents' evenings. Parents' evenings are one of the effective ways where parents and teachers communicate regarding learners' progress and problems (Postma, 1990:165).

Decision-making (4.5): By means of contact opportunities such as parent meetings, the school is often able to reach uninvolved parents (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:189). The importance of parental involvement can be stressed on these occasions. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of respondents (97%) agreed that parents should attend meetings where decisions are made. Such meetings serve as an effective tool for communication between the school and the parental home if there is to be any real partnership between the parents and educators (Postma, 1990:165).

School fees (4.6): The majority of respondents (89%) in the research sample agreed that parents must honour the payment of prescribed school fees. According to Van Schalkwyk (1990:19-24) one of the compelling reasons for parental involvement is that parents and the private sector make large financial contributions and parents should, through their involvement, ensure effective teaching and learning. Effective parental involvement can lead to greater financial support for the school.

Circulars / notices from school (4.7): Successful communication is an important part of any parent involvement plan (Postma, 1990:165). Parents and educators can communicate through circulars and notices. Most of the respondents (84%) in the research sample agreed that parents should respond to circulars and notices sent to them as this is the easiest way of communication between the parent, school and educators.

Learners' code of conduct (4.8): One of the functions of all school governing bodies in South Africa is to adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school (South African Schools' Act, Act No. 84 of 1996). Since learners' discipline in schools is one of the sensitive subjects (98%) of respondents agreed that parents should support with the drafting and implementation of a learner's code of conduct for the success and effectiveness of schools. Competent parents can make a valuable contribution by assisting educators to enforce discipline (Van Schalkwyk, 1997:155).

School activities (4.9): The majority of respondents (98%) in the research sample agreed that parents need to actively support their children's activities like sports, cultural activities, etc. Some parents are better skilled in extracurricular activities than some educators; hence they should provide their expertise to the school to develop learners holistically. Squelch and Lemmer (1994:93) describe parent involvement as an active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities which may be educational or non-educational.

Schoolwork (4.10): The South African Schools' Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 stipulates that the governing body and parents in general should promote the best interest of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school. The majority (98%) of respondents agreed that parents should assist their children with their schoolwork. According to Van Schalkwyk (1990:39) a partnership of this nature is the best way of getting parents and educators to work together on education and to share the responsibility of education.

Academic progress (4.11): All the respondents (100%) in the research sample agreed that parents should consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress. Van Schalkwyk (1990:19-24) states that the intellectual development of the child calls for parent-teacher

cooperation. The first seventeen years of a child's life are the most important for the development of his mind and parents play an important role in this development. This parental involvement can help to eliminate learning and behavioural problems.

Fundraising (4.12): The majority of respondents (92%) agreed that parents must be involved in the fundraising activities of the school. The South African Schools' Act, Act No. 84 (Section 49) states that all public schools' governing bodies are obliged to support their schools financially as best as they can. According to Van Schalkwyk (1990:25-32) one of the advantages of parental involvement in the school is that it can lead to greater financial support. The governing body may allow reasonable use of facilities of the school for community, social and school fundraising purposes, subject to such reasonable and equitable conditions as the governing body may determine which may include charging of a fee or tariff which accrues to the school (South African Schools' Act, Act No. 84 of 1996).

Volunteering services (4.13): A large percentage of respondents (98%) agreed that parents should volunteer their services in the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds. Alistair Macbeth (1993:196) proposes that a minimum programme for parent involvement in that teaching should be characterised by service rendering and partnership. A committee for buildings and grounds should be established in the school where parents could volunteer their services.

Class supervision (4.14): Parent cooperation is often easier to accomplish in smaller and more congenial class parents' committees (Dekker, 1989:28). If parents are involved in school activities initially in smaller groups at class level they will be able to make more significant contributions and they will be more prepared to support general school activities. Eighty-seven (87%) of the respondents in the research sample agreed that parents should be willing to supervise classes when educators are absent. According to Van Schalkwyk (1997:154-155)

class tasks in which parents can take part meaningfully can be divided into three categories, i.e. teaching, teaching media and administration.

Sports and cultural events (4.15): The majority of respondents (93%) agreed that parents should assist with sports and/or cultural events. Parents who have the knowledge in certain sporting codes and cultural events should be willing to assist educators who might not have the necessary skills in those sports codes or cultural activities so that learners can benefit.

4.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter information derived from the completed questionnaires issued to educators was presented in frequency tables and the findings thereof discussed in relation to the literature study.

The first part of the chapter dealt with an analysis of the biographical information of respondents. Thereafter descriptive statistics were used to analyse the educators' perceptions about the characteristics of an effective school.

In the following chapter the study will be summarised and certain recommendations will be made in the light of the findings of this research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

A summary of the previous chapters will be given and some of the most important findings from the research will be discussed in this final chapter. This will be followed by recommendations, criticism that emanate from this study, and a final remark.

5.2 SUMMARY

5.2.1 Statement of the problem

The problem that has been addressed in this study revolved around the characteristics of an effective school (cf. 1.3). In the literature study and through empirical research it was established that:

- Effective schools manifest certain characteristics.
- Certain strategies need to be implemented to assist ineffective schools to improve their conditions.

5.2.2 An effective school

The primary purpose of a school is to render a service, that is, to effect education and teaching. Schools can only achieve this objective for which they were instituted, if all the relevant stakeholders are actively involved in their respective roles. In essence, the effective functioning of a school largely depends on the leadership, management expertise and skills of the principal, the type of management team, educators' commitment and effective parental involvement in the school.

An effective school is characterised by a wide variety of factors. These factors are, *inter alia*, the following:

- Productive school climate and culture.
- Outstanding leadership.
- Active parental involvement.
- Effective instructional arrangements and implementation.
- High operationalised and requirements for education.
- Proper planning and guidance.
- Work-centred environment.
- Continuous in-service training and workshops for educators.
- Highly motivated educators.
- Adequate resources.
- Balances and bread-based curriculum.
- Recognition of educators' skills and practicals.

The success of the school largely depends on its human resources, especially educators and parents. If educators are highly motivated and guided properly and parents play their active role, there is no doubt that success in the school will be there.

The environment in the school should be conducive for effective education and learning to take place. All the necessary conditions need to prevail for the school to meet its challenges and needs.

5.2.3 Planning of the research

Chapter three was devoted to the research design that was used in the empirical survey. A structured questionnaire was used as research instrument. The composition, administration and data analysis of the questionnaire was dealt with. The principles of a pilot study were addressed, as well as the limitations of the research.

The information sought through the questionnaire was not available from any source and had to be acquired directly from respondents. A total of one hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to educators in both primary and secondary schools in the Ethekewini Region of KwaZulu-Natal. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were analysed for this study.

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information regarding characteristics of an effective school. The questions were formulated to establish what educators perceive to characterise an effective school and to gain insight into the following:

- Leadership and management.
- Motivation.
- Parental involvement.

5.2.4 Presentation and analysis of research data

The purpose of this study was to discuss the data collected from the questionnaires completed by one hundred and twenty educators and to offer comments and interpretations on the findings. At the outset, an explanation and description was provided as to the methods employed in the categorisation of responses and the analysis of the data. This was followed by the presentation and discussion of the responses to the questions in the questionnaire.

5.2.5 Aims of study

Specific aims (cf. 1.5) to determine the course of study were formulated by the researcher. In order to meet the aims and achieve the goals set, a literature study was undertaken from various sources available. An empirical survey consisting of a structured questionnaire was used together with the literature study to establish the characteristics of an

effective school. The formulated aims were achieved by means of a literature and empirical study.

5.3 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

5.3.1 Findings from the literature review

The following represent some of the more relevant findings from the literature study:

- For a school to function effectively a climate conducive to teaching and learning must be present. A positive climate where order and a safe environment for staff and learners are maintained is essential (cf. 2.2.1).
- An academically effective school is distinguished by its unique culture; a culture that is characterised by a structure, process and climate of values and norms that channel both the educators and the learners in the direction of successful teaching and learning (cf. 2.2.2).
- The effectiveness of a school largely depends on how efficiently the principal manages the school. If a school is vibrant, innovative, has a reputation for excellence in teaching and the learners are excelling, it is possible to point to the principal's effective leadership as the key to success (cf. 2.3.1).
- The success of a school also depends on the effectiveness of the school management team. The main tasks of the school management team are to plan, organise, direct and control (cf. 2.3.2).
- An effective school governance structure that involves all stakeholders in active and responsible roles encourages tolerance and rational discussions on collective decision-making (cf. 2.3.3).

- For a school to be successful its educational planning must include the application of rational systematic analysis of the process of educational development, with the aims of making education more effective and efficient in terms of responding to the needs and goals of learners and society as a whole (cf. 2.3.4).
- Effective methods to manage all forms of tension, including severe conflict between members of staff, are of the utmost importance (cf. 2.3.5).
- The professional development of educators is indeed an investment in human capital. The dividends yielded by personnel development leads to a more effective school with improved learner achievement, greater work satisfaction and a higher morale amongst educators (cf. 2.4).
- The curriculum of an effective school should be balanced and broad based with the aim of promoting the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of learners. It should prepare learners for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (cf. 2.6).
- For a school's success effective parental involvement is essential as it improves learners' academic achievement and behaviour at school; increases community support for the school, including human, financial and material resources (cf. 2.7).

5.3.2 Findings from the empirical study

Some important findings from the empirical study are:

- The majority of respondents (90%) in the research sample agreed that for a school to be effective the principal must create a culture of teaching and learning through his management style (cf. 2.1).

- More than ninety percent (94%) of the respondents confirmed that for a school to be successful the implementation of an effective disciplinary policy is essential. An orderly school environment, characterised by discipline and good behaviour, is vital for the successful functioning of the school (cf. 2.4).
- Almost all the respondents (98%) indicated that the effective running of a school depends on the communication skills of the principal. Effective communication between the principal and staff is what enables the school to successfully function as an organisation (cf. 2.7).
- The majority of respondents (98%) agreed that for a school to function effectively the principal must ensure that all staff members know what is expected of them (cf. 2.13).
- Most of the respondents (94%) stated that the effectiveness of a school is based on the principal's willingness to allow staff to take part in decision-making. Staff who participate in decision-making show more commitment to their work (cf. 2.15).
- Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents confirmed that an induction programme for new educators will motivate them to do their best and thus contribute to the effectiveness of the school (cf. 3.1).
- The larger percentage of the respondents (97%) agreed that a school could only be effective when educators receive praise for work well done. Praise and encouragement boost the self-confidence and self-esteem of educators which in turn will motivate them to strive for higher standards for themselves and the learners (cf. 3.7).
- Almost all the respondents (99%) said that opportunities to develop the professional skills of educators motivate them to put more effort in

their work and are thus essential for the effectiveness of a school (cf. 3.8).

- A high percentage (96%) of the respondents agreed that for a school to be effectively governed enough competent parents must readily avail themselves for election to the governing body (cf. 4.1).
- In an effective school the majority of parents should attend parents' evenings and meetings where important decisions are made. Eighty one percent (81%) and 97% of the respondents respectively agreed with the latter statement (cf. 4.4; 4.5).
- Nearly one hundred percent (99%) of the respondents indicated that in an effective school parents support their children's school activities and assist them with their schoolwork (cf. 4.8; 4.10).
- All the respondents (100%) stated that for a school to function effectively parents must consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress (4.11).

It was evident that schools that are well managed, better resourced, with motivated educators and actively involved parents stand a better chance of being successful compared to the ones not well managed, demotivated educators and less involved parents. Based on both the literature study and empirical study certain recommendations will be discussed.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Leadership and management skills

(1) Motivation

The main responsibility of a school in the community is to educate children. The school holds the whole future of the community it serves and that of society at large in its hands (cf. 2.3). This may however at times not be realised due to a number of reasons. One of such reasons is the lack of leadership and management skills of those who are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that effective teaching and learning take place in the school, especially the school principal.

Effective school management with the emphasis on acquisition of leadership and management expertise and skills should become available to school managers of schools experiencing leadership and management problems. At the moment very little is done to address such problems. It is the responsibility of both the government and educators to promote schools' effectiveness.

In the light of the above, it is imperative for school managers to receive some form of training and guidance on how to manage their schools so that they become effective.

(2) Recommendations

The recommendation is that in order for schools' managers to become effective, the Department of Education must:

- Facilitate seminars, workshops and in-service training programmes for school managers with a view to improve guidelines in respect of *inter alia*:

- the role functions of the school managers.
- the role functions of the school managers.
- effective communication skills.
- the creation of a conducive culture of teaching and learning.
- planning and organisation.
- crisis and conflict management skills.
- staff development programmes.
- staff involvement in decision-making process.
- effective delegation.

5.4.2 Educators' motivation

(1) Motivation

The findings in this study (cf. 2.5) reveal that educators are the ones who make things happen in the school, hence it is very important that they are kept motivated at all times for the success of the school.

In a school with an unmotivated team of educators, the goal of effective teaching and learning cannot be adequately realised. Positive attitudes and values must be inculcated in educators to become motivated. Various internal and external factors in the school may result in lack of motivation among educators, hence ineffective functioning of the school results.

It is therefore of critical importance that school managers are adequately equipped to motivate staff members even under difficult circumstances.

(2) Recommendations

The motivational aspect of the educators is the key ingredient for the schools' effectiveness, thus it is recommended that the employer should do the following to motivate educators:

- improve conditions of service for educators.
- recognise educators' performances.
- provide in-service training.
- delegate work to educators.
- allow educators opportunities for decision-making.
- improve channels of communication.
- create career path for educators.
- initiate programmes to address educators' stress.
- provide conducive working environment in schools.
- provide adequate resources in schools.

5.4.3 Parental involvement

(1) Motivation

The majority of schools in South Africa are community schools. Communities are made up of parents, since parents are primary educators of their children, it is therefore very important for them to be actively involved in their children's education.

Some parents are uncomfortable about involving themselves in school matters, this is caused by a number of reasons, and for example other schools do not welcome the parental involvement in the school. Parents do not feel valued by the school, inadequacy, shyness, resentment or fear (cf. 4.2). These matters need urgent attention.

(2) Recommendation

The recommendations are:

- Department of Education needs to create forums where parents will be empowered in matters regarding their involvement in schools.

- Since parents are primary educators of their children, they must be given a say in the management of their children's schools.
- Schools should go out of their way to encourage parents' active involvement in the running of the schools.
- Schools need to co-opt parents who are competent in areas of school management.
- Platforms where parents and educators share their vision about the school, feelings, skills and experiences should be created.
- School governing bodies and other parent structures must be offered full training and support in the responsible exercise of their roles and duties in the school.

5.4.4 Further research

(1) Motivation

During research and time spent collecting information on the characteristics of an effective school, the researcher became aware of many areas that need to be addressed for schools to function effectively and to ensure that schools' management receive adequate training and qualifications to meet the challenges and needs of the schools.

(2) Recommendation

The recommendation is that further research of a quantitative and qualitative nature must be undertaken with the aim of developing a well planned strategy to be implemented to equip schools' managers with relevant skills of effectively managing their schools.

5.5 CRITICISM

Criticism that emanates from this study includes the following:

- It can be assumed that many educators who completed the questionnaire drew their perceptions regarding their schools' achievements and their own unpleasant experiences. The probability therefore exists that many educators used the questionnaire as a means to show their dissatisfaction about their schools' management.
- Only Umlazi District in the Ethekekwini Region educators was used in the research. The sample population was therefore reduced.
- The research sample comprised educators in one predominantly established and successful region. Dissimilar responses might have been elicited from educators in other regions situated in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal.

5.6 FINAL REMARK

The purpose of this study was to give educators, principals, parents and other role players a critical evaluation of the characteristics of an effective school. It is envisaged that this study will be of value to all educators, educational authorities and other stakeholders.

It is hoped that the recommendations made in this study will be implemented with the view of improving the effectiveness of schools.

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APPENDIX 'A'

**Letter to Department of Education seeking
permission for distribution of Questionnaires**

LAMONTVILLE

4027

August 10 2004

Telefax : (031) 400 7870 (work)
Cell : 073 250 8569

The Senior Education Manager
Chatsworth Circuit
Private Bag X12
CHATSWORTH
4062

Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS WITHIN YOUR CIRCUIT

I am a Masters Degree student currently undertaking an intensive study on the characteristics of an effective school. An urgent appeal is hence made to conduct an empirical research in schools under your control. This research is towards my M.Ed. degree and is being carried out under the supervision of Proff G Urbani and MS Vos at the Durban-Umlazi campus of the University of Zululand.

The topic of my dissertation is *Characteristics of an effective school*. For the purpose of this research a questionnaire has been developed, which is to be administered to educators located in your circuit. All information elicited from the research will be treated as confidential and anonymity will be ensured.

The research project will offer invaluable information to all educators as well as to the Department of Education and Culture. A copy of the research findings and recommendations will be made available to your department, on request.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely



V J ZULU

APPENDIX 'B'

**Letter from Department of Education,
granting permission to distribute
Questionnaires**

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL/ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL/PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE/UMNYANGO WEFUNDO NAMASIKO/DEPARTEMENT VAN
ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR
ETHEKWENI REGION
UMLAZI DISTRICT

CHATSWORTH CIRCUIT

219 Florence Nightingale Road, Westcliff, Chatsworth

Telephone/Ucingo/Telefoon 031 - 4019038/4019052
Fax/Isikhahlezi/Faks 031 - 4019039
Toll Free No.: 0800360691

Postal Address/Ikheli Lakuphasa/Posadress :
Private Bag X12, Chatsworth, 4092

27 January 2005

To : Principals of Schools
SMT
Educators
School Governing Bodies – Executives

PERMISSION FOR ZULU V.J. TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MOBENI WARD SCHOOLS

Permission is hereby granted for Zulu V.J. of Msizi Dube Primary School, to conduct research for his studies.

Any problems experience, through the (research) project, need to be communicated through Zulu V. J. for my attention.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully



27/01/05

P.N. CELE
MOBENI WARD
SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION [MANAGEMENT]

APPENDIX 'C'

**Request to respondents seeking their
assistance in administering Questionnaire to
educators**

5444 Msimang Road
PO LAMONTVILLE
4027
August 10 2004

Tel. Nos. (031) 400 7870 (work)
(031) 469 0612 (home)

The Principal

Dear Sir / Madam

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DETERMINING EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL**

At present I am conducting a research study entitled *Characteristics of an effective school*, and educators from your school have been selected to participate in this research programme. I have received written permission from your Senior Educational Manager to enlist the help of your educators to complete a questionnaire.

I hereby seek your assistance in administering this questionnaire to any fifteen (15) educators on your staff. I am fully aware that in asking for your cooperation I am adding to your already considerable responsibilities and workload. However, I hope that this study will make a meaningful contribution towards the educators' understanding of the characteristics of an effective school.

Arrangements for collection of the completed questionnaire will be made with you in due course. The questionnaire should not take more than 20 minutes to complete.

Thanking you in anticipation for your cooperation and kind assistance.

Yours sincerely



V J ZULU
Msizi Dube Primary School

Msizi Dube Primary School
PO Box 42157

APPENDIX 'D'

Questionnaire

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRE

Characteristics of an effective school

V.J. ZULU
August 2004

5444 Msimang Road
PO LAMONTVILLE
4027
August 10 2004

Dear Educator

QUESTIONNAIRE: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

At present I am engaged in a research project towards my Masters in Education degree at the University of Zululand under the guidance of Proff G Urbani and M S Vos. The research is concerned with the *Characteristics of an effective school*.

As one of the selected respondents, I have taken the liberty of writing to you in order to seek your assistance in acquiring information about your experience relating to the research.

I can assure you that all information will be regarded as **strictly confidential**, and no personal details of any respondent, or school, will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any of the results be related to any particular educator or school.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely



V J ZULU

**UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, PLEASE COMPLETE THE
QUESTIONNAIRE BY MAKING A CROSS (X) IN THE APPROPRIATE
BLOCK**

SECTION 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1.1 Gender

Male ☐

Female ☐

1.2 Age group

Under 25 ☐

25 – 30 ☐

31 – 35 ☐

36 – 40 ☐

41 – 45 ☐

46 – 50 ☐

51 – 55 ☐

56 – 60 ☐

61 – 65 ☐

Over 65 ☐

1.3 Home language

English ☐

Afrikaans ☐

Zulu ☐

Other (please specify)

1.4 Current post you are holding

Level 1 ☐ Level 2 ☐ Level 3 ☐ Level 4 ☐

1.5 Number of years of completed service as at 31/12/2003

0-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐
21-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ More than 30 years ☐

1.6 Number of years in your current school

0-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 15+ ☐

1.7 Highest academic qualification(s) (e.g. B.A.; B.Com.; M.Ed., etc)

.....

1.8 Highest professional qualification(s) (e.g. PTD; FDE; HDE, etc.)

.....

SECTION 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS

- Please read each statement carefully before giving your opinion, or response.
- Please ensure that you do not omit a question, or skip pages.
- Please be frank when giving your opinion.
- Please do not discuss statements with anyone.
- For each of the statements, please indicate your response by marking the appropriate block with a cross (X).

Thank you for your kind cooperation!

Before expressing your feelings or opinion regarding a specific statement, consider the following to indicate your response:

EXAMPLE

An effective school is characterised by strong management and leadership

	Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
If you agree with the statement	X		
If you disagree with the statement		X	
If you are uncertain about the statement			X

All the statements that follow bear reference to the characteristics of an effective school. Please express your opinion or feelings on each of the statements as frankly as possible.

2 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The effectiveness of a school largely depends on its leadership and management.

For a school to be effective the principal must:		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
2.1	Create a culture of teaching and learning through his/her management style			
2.2	Have the abilities to be an effective educational manager			
2.3	Plan activities well in advance (e.g. academic, cultural and sporting activities)			
2.4	Implement an effective disciplinary policy			
2.5	Have the ability to successfully resolve conflict situations			
2.6	Be democratic in his/her management skills			
2.7	Have good communication skills			
2.8	Provide opportunities for staff development			
2.9	Be capable of handling stressful situations effectively			
2.10	Not be absent from school without a valid reason			
2.11	Not allow his/her domestic (private) life to effect his/her professional life			
2.12	Admit to mistakes he/she has made			
2.13	Ensure that staff members know exactly what is expected of them			
2.14	Empower staff members through the delegation of tasks			
2.15	Allow staff to take part in decision-making			

3 MOTIVATION

An effective school is characterised by well-motivated educators

A school can only be effective when educators are motivated by, <i>inter alia</i> , the following:		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
3.1	An induction programme for new educators			
3.2	A mentor programme for first-time educators			
3.3	Setting well defined levels for staff performance			
3.4	Involving educators in decision-making			
3.5	Being informed about effective educational methods			
3.6	Updating educators on new teaching methods			
3.7	Receiving praise for work well done			
3.8	Opportunities to develop their professional skills			
3.9	Effective guidance from the school management team			
3.10	Being involved in all the school's activities			
3.11	Receiving empathy from the management team			
3.12	Educators receiving moral support when needed			
3.13	Offering constructive criticism about unsatisfactory work			
3.14	Suggestions made by educators are considered by the principal			
3.15	Being informed timeously of matters concerning them.			

4 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Sufficient parental involvement is one of the requirements for an effective school.

In an effective school:		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
4.1	Enough competent parents must readily avail themselves for election to the governing body			
4.2	The majority of parents must attend meetings to elect governors			
4.3	Parent governors must attend meetings regularly			
4.4	The majority of parents should attend parent evenings			
4.5	Meetings where decisions are made must be well attended by parents			
4.6	The majority of parents must honour the payment of prescribed school fees			
4.7	All parents should respond to circulars / notices from the school			
4.8	All parents should support the implementation of a code of conduct for learners			
Parents must:				
4.9	Actively support their children's school activities (e.g. sport, cultural)			
4.10	Assist their children with their schoolwork			
4.11	Consult with educators regarding their children's academic progress			
4.12	Be involved in the fundraising activities of the school			
		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
4.13	Volunteer their services in the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds			

4.14	Be willing to supervise classes when educators are absent			
4.15	Be willing to assist with sport and/or cultural events			

I am most grateful for your time and assure you that all the information provided by you, will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

Thank you!