

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the visual and textual data were analysed and interpreted. Themes that were relevant to the study were presented. All six themes addressed the research objectives. The layout of this chapter is indicated in the figure below:

**Table 5.1: Summary of Chapter 5**



#### 5.2 OBJECTIVES REVISITED

The intention for the presentation of this section was to report on whether the objectives were achieved or not.

**Table 5.1: How objectives were achieved**

<b>OBJECTIVE 1 – PHASE 1</b>	<b>Where the objective was addressed in the study</b>	<b>Achieved/Not achieved</b>
<p>To examine the essence of reputation management and why it is an important contributing factor to functioning schools. Reputation was conceptualised, factors that contribute to good reputation were identified and discussed. The information on how reputation can be managed was collected</p>	<p>Chapter 2 – This chapter elaborated on the determinants of reputation and reputation management</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
<p><b>OBJECTIVE 2 – PHASE 2</b></p>		
<p>To understand the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders on factors that contribute to reputation at schools in Fezile Dabi district. The objective was dealt with by collecting visual and textual data from internal and external stakeholders from the participating schools in the Fezile Dabi district.</p>	<p>Chapter 4 – This chapter analysed and interpreted raw data collected from participants on different factors that are causal to reputation at schools</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
<p><b>OBJECTIVE 3 – PHASE 2</b></p>		
<p>To investigate factors perceived by internal and external stakeholders as leading to bad reputation. Data collected by means of semi-structured interviews, photographs and documents highlighted the underlying</p>	<p>Chapter 4 – This chapter also analysed and interpreted raw data on different factors that are fundamental to bad</p>	<p>Achieved</p>

factors to bad reputation at schools.	reputation at schools	
<b>OBJECTIVE 4 – PHASE 2</b>		
To come up with recommendations to further strengthen the effectiveness of reputation management at schools in the Fezile Dabi district.	Chapter 5 – In this chapter the recommendations on how schools can reinforce their strategies in ensuring reputation management were dealt with.	Achieved

### 5.3 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

In this section the literature review chapters which are chapters one and two are summarised. This summary is done to understand the intention of the study as a whole. I focused on dissecting the main intentions of the study as summed up in the problem statement (*cf.* 1.2) and the aim and objectives of this research (*cf.* 1.4).

#### 5.3.1 Summary of Chapter 1

This chapter familiarized the reader with the concept of reputation management and laid down a foundation of what was to be expected in the rest of the study. The problem statement indicated that in order for schools to survive and continue being effective in their endeavours including educating learners and shaping their behaviour. It becomes vital therefore that in order for schools to continue to exist, they have to manage their reputation effectively. It is envisaged that effective reputation management will curb reputation pitfalls and the consequences thereof.

### **5.3.2 Summary of Chapter 2**

The focus of Chapter 2 was to highlight the essence of reputation management at schools. It was important to understand the concept reputation before one can talk about its management. The chapter elaborated on factors that lead to good reputation. These factors are divided into those that schools must have (provided by the Department of Education): quality of training educators; trained managers; and financial soundness (*cf.* 2.2). Those that schools themselves must create or do in order for them to be considered reputable: good workplace environment; emotional appeal; social responsibility; corporate ethic; accountability; effective school financial management; communication; good leadership and management; academic performance; and school organizational climate (*cf.* 2.3).

Factors that were identified as leading to bad reputation at schools included: conflict, the collapse of culture of learning; and teaching and bad media reports. The literature also highlighted the benefits of having a good reputation which were divided into benefits for schools and for parents and community members.

Reputation management entailed the tasks of school managers, the involvement of other stakeholders and using communication as a management strategy.

## **5.4 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

This section summarises the empirical research which are chapters three and four. Chapter three focused on the research methodology used in this study and Chapter four on the analysis and interpretation of data. The methods used in the collection of data, the types of data collected and the findings are presented in this section.

### **5.4.1 Summary of Chapter 3**

An interpretivist research paradigm guided the empirical research in this study. This paradigm is based on the assumptions that reality is socially constructed and that people are key, that one can consider reality in terms of how people interpret their everyday lived experiences and that access to this reality is only through social

constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meaning (*cf.* 3.2). A qualitative research method (*cf.* 3.3) used was in line with this paradigm and the phenomenological strategy (*cf.* 3.4) complemented the qualitative approach in that it attempted to understand people’s perceptions and thereby described the meaning people attached to the phenomenon which in this study is reputation management at schools.

The sample in this research was made up of (n 20) stakeholders from four participating schools in the Fezile Dabi district. Data collection methods used included semi-structured interviews, visual data and documents (*cf.* 3.5). The textual and visual data were analysed. The open and axial coding were used to generate themes for analysis of data. After identification of codes, they were grouped to form categories or themes. The process also included the use of the inductive method to identify themes in this research. Six themes were a product of the inductive process (*cf.* 3.6).

#### 5.4.2 Summary of Chapter 4

The profile of the participants was presented first, then the analysis and interpretation followed. Themes were linked to the research questions, thus, it was important to determine which themes answer which research question. Themes and the research questions they answered are indicated in the table below:

**Table 5.2: Themes and the research questions**

Research question	Theme
What is the essence of reputation management and why is it an important contributing factor to functioning schools?	This question was addressed in the literature in Chapter 2
What are the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders on factors that contribute to good reputation at schools in	Themes 1 (effectiveness), 2 (emotional appeal), 3 (workplace environment and climate), and 4 (effective leadership)

Fezile Dabi district?	
What factors are perceived by internal and external stakeholders as leading to bad reputation?	Theme 5 internal and external factors
What strategies are employed by managers in the participating schools to manage reputation?	Theme 6 strategies used to manage reputation
What recommendations can be developed to further strengthen the effectiveness of reputation management at schools in the Fezile Dabi district.	Addressed in section 5.5 below

#### 5.4.3 Findings from the literature

Data from the empirical research indicated the following regarding research question one:

**What is the essence of reputation management and why is it an important contributing factor to functioning schools?**

The finding from the literature review regarding the essence of reputation management was that, first reputation itself is based on social evaluation and judgements made by internal and external stakeholders which determine whether the school becomes **respected** and regarded as reputable (*cf.* 2.2). The evaluation is based on different elements of corporate reputation, such as general effectiveness of school management and or the quality of service the school renders. The evaluation of certain or all elements pertaining to reputation give the evaluators **total perceptions** about the organisation (*cf.* 2.3).

Reputation management therefore, pertains, to a continuous effort to ensure that a reliable and consistent harmony between all stakeholders exists and to influence the perceptions of stakeholders positively by effectively executing their duties and by strengthening reputation through focus on factors that build good reputation (*cf.* 2.6).

#### **5.4.4 Findings from the empirical research**

The finding in this research regarding the core of reputation management was linked to the following research question:

**What are the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders on factors that contribute to good reputation at schools in Fezile Dabi district?**

Participants indicated different factors contributing to good reputation (*cf.* 4.3):

- effective teaching and learning which is part of the provision of service to communities. The good service was made possible by teamwork, hard work and commitment of educators to their work. These two factors lead to good results reflected in high pass rate;
- emotional appeal where only respect was mentioned by participants, trustworthiness and appreciation were not mentioned;
- clean surroundings, which were safe and secure where gates were locked. Engagement of learners in sporting activities can lead to an effective school climate as all schools boasted of their achievements in sporting activities. Commitment was mentioned as the contributory factor to the achievements in extra-curricular activities;
- good leadership and management where the involvement of the principal contributed to the school's achievements in sport. Other factors included defining

the roles of stakeholders so that they could work within the confines of their employment and controlling and evaluating educators' work;

- involving parents in such matters as misbehaviour of learners; school safety and their academic progress. Discipline was maintained through the help of parents in one school. Most schools met with parents at least once per term, and at the end of the year. The forms of communication mentioned were letters and community radio. The forms of communication were indicated as one way: from schools to parents and never from parents to school. Another problem highlighted was that of poor attendance of parents in meetings; and
- effective financial management with clear procedure regarding the management of funds, principals being the chairpersons of the finance committees to ensure accountability, school clerks being responsible for collecting money from learners and from educators. Schools were clear about how money received from the Department of Education had to be spent: half of the money on Learner Support Material. Financial reports and budgets were reported to parents.

There were indications that both schools and their communities were benefiting from the availability of good reputation management indicators:

- schools were boasting of having high learner enrolment. Parents had to choose from a number of schools in the area. All participating schools were in old townships and not in informal settlements; and
- parents also benefited in that they were spoilt for choice, they could be able to choose the best schools for their children where they would be taught.

The finding in this research regarding the factors leading to bad reputation management addressed the following question:

## What factors are perceived by internal and external stakeholders as leading to bad reputation?

The empirical research indicated two factors that lead to bad reputation in the participating schools. The first factor mentioned was external in that the Department of Education failed to plan effectively for a school's removal to a vacant building in town (*cf.* 4.3):

- the technical aspects that the Department of Education did not plan for included transporting learners from the township to town, this led to learners bunking classes, bad behaviour of learners, un-attendance of classes and absenteeism. Educators were also not in control of the situation such that leadership and management were under spotlight.

The second factor mentioned by participants was that of bad media reports which they could not manage:

- learners were taking photos of the incidences and of educators and published them on face book, school personnel were reactive in their approach as it was after the disruption of classes and photos of educators taken to websites that they took action by involving parents. No other means of solving the problems were explored except involvement of parents. The only time when two of the participating schools communicated with parents through media was when they wanted to clarify something that they felt parents were not happy with. There were no policies indicating the procedure for dealing with media in the participating schools.

The finding in this research regarding strategies that managers employ in managing reputation was addressing the following question:

**What strategies are employed by managers in the participating schools to manage reputation?**

The strategies used included ensuring that (cf. 4.3):

- the climate was conducive for effective teaching and learning in that there were good working relationships between educators and managers. Good climate was also promoted by involvement of these schools in extra-curricular activities, not only for participation but also for competition. The achievements in these activities could have influenced participation in core activities.
- schools communicated with parents although this was only one-sided. In one school there was a communication breakdown where there was no trust, educators not trusting their managers;
- there was effective teaching in schools and that they were producing good results

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are two types of recommendations made in this research, recommendations for practical implementation of findings and recommendations for further research. Recommendations for practical implementation of findings are presented below:

### **5.5.1 Recommendations for practical implementation of findings**

In this section recommendations addressing the following research question are given. Recommendations with regards to the objective two

**To understand the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders on factors that contribute to good reputation at schools in Fezile Dabi district**

Participating schools made an great effort in building and maintaining good reputation as highlighted in the findings above. The focus however was on what schools could do only and not on what schools should have.

Schools need to have a clear understanding of what reputation entails in order for them to respond positively and efficiently to its demands. Schools that are serious about their reputation won't hesitate to do needs analysis which will determine which factors strengthen reputation presently, whether they want to continue with these factors or not and whether new strategies need to be adopted for which areas.

An effective leadership on the formulation of strategies to strengthen reputation needs to be shown. Effective leadership will help in giving direction on planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies. Effective leadership is hindered by lack of information and expertise. There is a need for training of school managers regarding reputation management. Good management of reputation cannot be a matter of luck but management in the real sense. Schools are aware of factors leading to good reputation but sustaining these factors while being innovative is a challenge.

Recommendations with regards to research objective three

**To investigate factors perceived by internal and external stakeholders as leading to bad reputation**

External factors that contribute to bad reputation need to be dealt with and not be wished away. Reputation becomes dented when problems are left unsolved for longer periods of time. An effective leadership and willingness to tackle matters with the people concerned as a way of doing damage control could help. There is need for school managers to manage “beyond boundaries” that is manage factors that are not within the school but those that have a potential of bringing the school into disrepute. Training in this type of management also becomes imperative.

School managers need to be creative in strategies used to manage reputation, the use of education to solve some problems should be considered. Learners are sometimes not aware of their rights and how they violate other people's rights. Rights education is needed where learners can be taught about the right to privacy and what the consequences are of violating such a right. For instance, taking photos of educators without their consent and putting them on face book is a violation of educators' right which has legal implications.

The unavailability of policies regarding communication and yet communication is done by schools on a daily basis shows ineffectiveness on the side of the management. Policies give guidance on the direction the school has to take in cases of a transgression of a rule or a violation of a right. Policies will stipulate procedures to be followed regarding communication with the media. Without this guidance and stipulated procedures, schools fumble when they are faced with issues of miscommunication or bad media reports.

Private companies and institutions of higher learning have people who work as head of communications. There are good lessons that can be learnt from these institutions: the first one is that there should be one person responsible for communication. This person holds an important position and that he or she is accountable to the stakeholders regarding the manner in which he or she manages communication. In that way communication with external stakeholders will be carefully structured to avoid miscommunication.

One way communication with parents needs to change and schools should be to adopt a two way communication thereby allowing parents an opportunity for total involvement in their children's education. They never become fully involved if they are dictated to and always told about what has to happen to schools without being given a chance to contribute. Parents need to be given a chance to air their views on issues at school and to evaluate strategies that are used for reputation management to get their perspective

and how they want things to be done. There is a need for training of school managers regarding communication management.

Recommendations regarding strategies to manage reputation management

**To determine strategies employed by managers in the participating schools to manage reputation**

Very few strategies are used in the participating schools to manage reputation, these are effective teaching and learning, maintaining good results, maintaining a positive school climate and communicating achievements with parents. As much as these are strategies that have been tried and tested new strategies to deal with new challenges need to be developed. The strategy of involving parents when learners misbehave helps sometimes but not always as they are not able to talk to their own children in other instances. The hour allocated for staff development, which is immediately after teaching time can be used for a workshop on strategies to build reputation. It is believed that such strategies should be linked to the immediate environment of the school. Top down approach in this aspect would be difficult to implement as strategies should be community-based. Schools would benefit from the involvement the departments, community based organisations and interested individuals in such session.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations for further research**

Based on the aspects that this research exposed, a follow up study can be carried out on:

- reputation management in schools in former model C schools;
- what contributes to reputation management in schools in affluent areas;

- evaluation of a reputation management programme developed and implemented in poorly managed schools; and
- comparison between strategies that contribute to good reputation in high schools and institutions of higher learning.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

In this study the perceptions of stakeholders regarding reputation management at schools in Fezile Dabi were investigated. The literature review indicated important aspects regarding factors that contribute to good and bad reputation, strategies to manage reputation and the benefits of good reputation for a school and for the community. There were similarities between the literature review and empirical research regarding these factors.

The study highlighted important findings of which recommendations for practice and further research were made. All the objectives highlighted in Chapter 1 of this study were achieved.