

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARIES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The layout of this chapter is structured as follows: Summary Chapter 1 (*cf.* 5.3.1); Summary Chapter 2 (*cf.* 5.3.2); Findings from the literature review (*cf.* 5.3.3); Summary and conclusion from the empirical research (*cf.* 5.4); Summary Chapter 3 (*cf.* 5.4.1); Summary Chapter 4 (*cf.* 5.4.2); Findings from the empirical research (*cf.* 5.4.3); Recommendations for practice (*cf.* 5.5); Contributions of the study (*cf.* 5.6); Limitations (*cf.* 5.7); Recommendations for further research (*cf.* 5.8); and Conclusion (*cf.* 5.9).

5.2 OBJECTIVES REVISITED

It was imperative to revisit the objectives of the study to report on whether they were achieved or not:

Table 5.1: How objectives were achieved

OBJECTIVE 1 – PHASE 1	WHERE THE OBJECTIVE WAS DEALT WITH IN THE DOCUMENT	ACHIEVED
To investigate what constitutes a healthy school environment. This objective compelled me to collect information on the determinant of healthy school environments which included availability of health policies, schools health programs including physical education, the National School Nutrition programme, health education, involvement of community members, learners and educators.	Chapter 2 elaborated on the determinants of healthy school environments	Achieved

OBJECTIVE 2- PHASE 1		
To determine what legislative principles and policies guide the creation of a healthy school environment. This objective was dealt with by a literature research on National policies on health promotion. Policies that were found included the National Policy on HIV/AIDS, the National health policy in education, the CAPS and the youth and adolescents' health policies.	Chapter 2 started off by discussing the policies. The rationale behind this was that the policies were regarded as the one of the main determinants in the promotion of healthy school environments.	Achieved
OBJECTIVE 3- PHASE 2		
To determine the effectiveness of SMT members in managing healthy school environments. This objective was dealt with by collecting data by means of semi-structured interviews and photographs. The data yielded results on the health programmes that schools used, involvement of community members, involvement of internal stakeholders.	In Chapter 4 where raw data from the participants was analysed and interpreted different areas of effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the SMT were highlighted.	Achieved
OBJECTIVE 4 – PHASE 2		
To make recommendations regarding the management of healthy school environments.	Recommendations on what the SMT could do in order to be effective in the endeavour to ensure healthy environments were dealt with in this chapter	Achieved

5.3 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

This section intended to summarise literature review chapters: chapters one and two. This was done to understand and summarize the intention of the study as a whole. The focus was therefore, on scrutinizing the main intentions of the study as encapsulated in the purpose statement, and the aims of this research.

5.3.1 Summary of Chapter 1

The intention of this chapter was to orientate, and lay down the foundation on what unfolded in the rest of the text and the research process. The problem statement indicated that that many children in South African schools are exposed to learning environments that are potentially damaging to their physical, mental, social and emotional well-being (*cf.* 1.1) and for this reason it is crucial that schools are transformed into places that promote healthy environments (*cf.* 1.1). It is envisaged that the promotion of healthy environments at schools will influence the community to learn to recognize and reduce environmental health threats that may be present at homes (*cf.* 1.1).

5.3.2 Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter's focus was to understand the essence of healthy school environments. The approach that is widely used in the promotion of healthy school environments is the whole school approach (*cf.* 2.3) which emphasizes a multipronged approach focusing on the importance of nutrition (*cf.* 2.4.4), physical activity (*cf.* 2.4.8) and health education (*cf.* 2.4.2). The whole school approach cannot be effective without the development and implementation of policies that are to guide the role players regarding the important areas of healthy environments to focus on, how the promotion of healthy school environments should be conducted (*cf.* 2.4.1). The involvement and active participation of external (community members) and internal stakeholders play a major role in ensuring not only the success of the programmes designed for the promotion of healthy school environments but also to ensure that resources that the school needs

are made available. The creation of a healthy school environment cannot be left to be the responsibility of a selected few therefore, there is a need for mobilization of both the school and community resources to make children's education and health a priority and a reality. The chapter recognizes that fostering and achieving the goal of healthy school environments would require training of role players (*cf.* 2.4.7.3). Capacity-building supports the development of sustainable skills, organizational structures, resources and commitment to enhanced outcomes.

5.4 SUMMARY FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This section intends to summarise chapter focusing on the empirical research that is chapters three (research methodology) and five (analysis and interpretation of data). This is done to summarize the methods implemented in the collection of data and the findings from the empirical research.

5.4.1 Summary of Chapter 3

The research paradigm that was used for this study is social constructivist. This paradigm holds the assumptions that individuals seek in an understanding of the world in which they live and work. My aim for using this research paradigm was to rely as much as possible on the participants' views regarding the promotion of healthy school environments. A qualitative method and phenomenological design were used to understand and interpret the meaning that participants give to the promotion of healthy environments in their schools. Participants and schools as research sites were selected by means of a purposive sampling method. The schools were selected on the basis of their relevance in providing rich data in the quest to respond to the topic.

Data was collected by means of interviews, documentation and photography. It is this data that was analysed and interpreted in chapter four. It was important to include a section on trustworthiness as it is an important aspect in the process of deciding whether the research results can be trusted or taken as genuine or not.

Ethical measures highlighted in Chapter three were undertaken to ensure that the participants and the research sites are not put at risk and are respected.

5.4.2 Summary of Chapter 4

Data analysis was done in stages, the first stage included making sense out of the data that was transcribed from field notes and audio tapes and the image data collected by means of photography. This data was triangulated and in the second stage themes were formed from the data. Identification of themes included reading several times from the transcripts and formulating broad themes that emerged from the data which helped in answering the research questions.

About twenty two themes were identified from the data. Themes were grouped in such a way that they answer the research questions.

Under the research question one, the theme that was identified was that collaboration was hindered by lack of leadership. Regarding the research question two the theme that was identified was that schools were at different levels regarding compliance to policy. Regarding the research question three two themes were identified: the general management of programmes was not effective; and that there was no synergy among educators, learners and SMT members regarding promotion of health.

5.4.3 Findings from the empirical research

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

Question 1: What constitutes a healthy school environment?

The finding in this research regarding determinants of healthy school environments was that:

- That there was involvement of community members in the promotion of healthy environments at schools; schools struggled to sustain garden projects; needy learners benefited from the National School Nutrition Programme; there were no clear strategies to identify needy learners at schools; there was commitment in ensuring that needy learners are fed; participants were not sure of the number of learners they have; schools had first-aid kits; most participants never received training on the handling and use of first-aid; learners were only involved in cleaning and not active in other programmes; schools were at different levels regarding the provision of NSNP; schools were at different levels regarding the kitchen hygiene; and that there were a lot of learners that do not benefit from the physical activity at schools (*cf.* 4.3).

Question 2: What legislative principles and policies guide the creation of a healthy school environment?

Participants were aware of relevant policies that they had to implement but:

- Some schools had policies whilst one school did not have; there were difficulties in the implementation of these policies as although all schools had different committees did not meet; some members were not clear about their roles and responsibilities in nutrition and ensuring cleanliness; and most committees were dysfunctional (*cf.* 4.3).
- Schools do not comply with policy regarding physical activity and prevention of communicable diseases; but they comply regarding the provision of NSNP in that learners were fed (*cf.* 4.3).

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

Question 3: How effective are SMT members in managing healthy school environments?

The SMT was not effective in managing the implementation of plans for enhancement of healthy environments:

- In planning the activities that committees were to implement hence in other schools there were no policies to guide role players; in monitoring activities such as physical education and nutrition; there was a lack of strategies to motivate educators to ensure their commitment; a lack of support to enhance the promotion of healthy school environments by ensuring that there were resources especially regarding nutrition and first aid contents; in capacitating educators to make certain the effective implementation of plans, participants needed training first aid and exercises for physical education; and managers were not members of the health committees in most schools (*cf.* 4.3).
- Committee members could not rely on the SMT to help in dealing with challenges as they either ignored their reports or just disband in active committees (*cf.* 4.3).

The SMT failed to give direction to enhance collaboration between community members and internal stakeholders. Although findings indicated that these schools were supported with basic needs by community members, government departments, NGOs and a local newspaper:

- None of these people were recruited to committees or involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of plans; only one school mentioned being helped by community members in terms of gardening; and schools were able to approach community members for help with resources but failed to ensure partnership with these organizations to the benefit of all stakeholders (*cf.* 4.3).

The SMT failed to ensure synergy between role players such as the learners, community members and educators:

- Learners were treated as recipients as they were not actively involved in planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes (*cf.* 4.3);
- Educators were neither committed nor interested in the programmes and the SMT was not doing anything to rectify the situation (*cf.* 4.3); and
- Even where schools lacked capacity such as in physical education, first aid and felling of alien plants they never involved the community (*cf.* 4.3).

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.5.1 Recommendations for practical implementation of the findings

In this section recommendations for practice are given. These recommendations are addressing the research question four.

What guidelines can be formulated regarding the management of healthy school environments?

After a thorough analysis of the findings highlighted above, it can be concluded that participating schools made an effort in enhancing healthy environments but experienced challenges. The following recommendations are therefore intended to assist schools:

Recommendation with regards to the research aim one

Aim 1: To determine what constitutes a healthy school environment

Vulnerable learners - In trying to address the plight of vulnerable learners, a clear identification process needs to be identified. This process will be helpful in collating the numbers of such learners. Having correct number of vulnerable learners will assist schools to plan in advance. Lack of numbers will cause the school to deal with this matter arbitrarily. Identification of vulnerable learners is part of needs analysis that can help in planning and allocation of resources.

Garden project - This is a very vital project which can impact the lives of vulnerable learners positively, if it can be done in collaboration with all stake holders. Teacher, learners and parents can play a role in ensuring that school garden projects are successful. Mpumalanga is a farming area with a number of experienced farmers. The involvement of these farmers in the training of educators regarding what crops to plant when, how to deal with insecticides and the types of soil would enhance the gardening projects. Farmers should be part of the planning and implantation of the gardening project. Parents are also important role players as they would help learners in manning the gardens.

It is also important to publicise the achievements in local newspapers in order to motivate the community.

Alien trees- These trees pose a serious danger to the environment, because they grow up to cause a hazard. These trees interfere with the buildings, they can crack the walls, they kill other trees and they can also be a health hazard. Proper advice should be solicited so that they are not planted at all, and schools that have such plants should engage the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism in Mpumalanga. The department would have people with expertise of felling such trees.

Toilet hygiene -This is the area that was neglected in some participating schools. Dirty toilets pollute the whole school environment if left unattended. Weekly programme, which is implemented vigilantly is needed. The problem in the participating school was the lack of understanding regarding the fact that all programmes that they were implementing were part of health promotion. This is the reason they focused on surroundings whilst neglecting toilets. There is therefore a need for the Department of Education in Mpumalanga to provide workshops. In these workshops information on the importance of each of the programmes that are intended to promote health in schools should be emphasized.

Community partnerships - The school can partner with local businesses who play a role in the creation of healthy school environment. Community members should be part

of programmes. The research has shown that there were companies who vested interest in healthy environments. Schools with the capacity to build partnerships can achieve more. Training on how to involve the community in health programmes is therefore imperative.

- Recommendations with regards to research aim 2

Aim 2: to determine the legislative principles and policies guiding the creation of healthy school environments

Physical Education, nutrition and prevention of communicable diseases – The main problem highlighted in Chapter 4 was that educators did not adhere to policy and that there was a lack of knowledge regarding their roles.

There is a need for statutory training of all educators in policies in general and health policies specifically. This should be an ongoing training which given to all educators beginning of each year.

- The first aid training is required by the law (SA, 1996b)
- Training on different exercises are required by the educators

Compliance training is also recommended in this research. The SMT will be responsible in identifying who requires the training. The procedure that should be followed is indicated below:

- Carry out a staff development needs analysis to determine which staff members need training, what type of training do they need and how often do they need the training
- Ensure that there is a jointly agreed policy on training and development of educators and learners
- Make the staff members aware of their obligation to attend the training

Policies- Committees that have policies, guidelines or constitutions become more effective, because they know what their duties are. Committees should therefore have policies that will guide their activities, it is also through these policies that the SMT can be able to monitor progress in terms of what the committee should do. In the statutory and compliance workshops educators can be trained on the importance of not only having policies but also implementation.

Committees - It will be proper rather to investigate the cause of dysfunctionality, and address problems. The SMT should have programme of interacting with committees before the end of each term where the committees are reporting to the SMT and at the end of each term they report to parents on their achievements and challenges. The SMT should also form part of committees.

Recommendations with regards to research aim 3

Aim 3: to determine the effectiveness of SMT members in managing healthy school environments

SMT – The SMT should play their role in supporting committees by being part of the planning of the programmes in order for them to effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of plans. Before the end of each year different committees should sit with the SMT and draft an itinerary for the following year. In this planning meeting problems that the committee encountered during the year are discussed and strategies to deal with such challenges developed to be implemented when challenges arise.

5.5.2 Recommendations for further research

Based on the aspects that this study unearthed, the follow up study can be undertaken on:

- How healthy school environments can enhance learner academic performance;
- The role partnerships play in the creation of healthy school environments; and

- The leadership style/s that enhance the promotion of healthy school environment.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of the SMT in managing healthy school environments. The research was conducted by means of literature review and empirical research. The study highlighted important findings of which recommendations were made.