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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

An investigation into school principals' experience and perceptions of participative management

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate three principals' perceptions and experience of participative management and to gain insight into and understanding of the dimensions involved in participative management from the perspective of the three principals.

The research was conducted within the interpretive paradigm, since I was interested in understanding the subjective experience and individual perceptions of three principals with regard to participative management and the meaning they attach to it in their natural settings: how they describe, interpret and make sense of participative management. Data were collected by means of questionnaires, interviews and observation.

The findings indicate overwhelming support for the notion that participative management (collegiality) does have a positive influence with regard to creating a sense of common goals, shared vision, a sense of ownership, commitment and improved human relations.

The respondents emphasized the critical role of the leader in facilitating the implementation of collegiality as well as an increasing awareness of the potential of participative management to improve human development through delegation. The responses revealed interesting paradoxes with regard to the tensions between leadership and leaderless organizations, as well as between autonomy and interdependence. Responses also reflect the sentiment that participative management should be selective, involving only those with the necessary skills and expertise in the decision-making process.

While there is an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from collegiality, critical statements about participative management include the time-consuming nature of participative management, and the notion that participative management impinges on the authority of the principals.

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Finally, my gratitude goes to my whole family, especially my mother, who supported me in many ways to complete this task successfully.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Charles Mungunda, hereby declare that this study is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for a degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by complete references.

Signed:.....

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My interest in this research emanated from my personal experience as a teacher over several years. I have worked under the headship of various principals, first as a teacher and later as an acting head of department. Each principal adopted a different approach to participative management, ranging from partial to full participation of teachers in the decision-making process. Furthermore, taking into account the historical legacy of the apartheid education system in Namibia, I became interested in exploring the attitude and perceptions of the principals towards the new dispensation, which calls for more involvement of teachers in decision-making. According to *Towards education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training* (MBEC 1993:42) it is important that in order to teach democracy, our teachers and our education system as a whole must practise democracy.

My study was also guided by previous research on participative management. According to Brouillete (cited in Somech 2002:342) participative management is a concept surrounded by confusion, despite much thought and activity. Most studies do not define dimensions of participative management but define participative management as a generic construct (Alutto & Balasco cited in Somech 2002:342). Through this “single-dimension approach, researchers examine participative management as an aggregate organisational characteristic” (Alutto et al. cited in Somech 2002:342) Although such an approach allows for generalization about organisations and their characteristics (Bacharach et al. cited in Somech 2002:342), it could depict an oversimplified picture, which might prevent an understanding of how participative management varies across different contents and contexts, and among individual managers.

In light of the above, this study seeks to fill the gap by addressing the issue of participative management from a multidimensional (i.e. not emphasizing one aspect of collegiality e.g. the decision-making domain alone) approach by drawing data from the principals’ subjective and personal experience of this phenomenon.

Context of my research

Education systems throughout the world have undergone profound restructuring and transformation. This could be attributed to the concept of democracy that penetrated not only the political systems but all spheres of social, civic and organisational life. After independence, Namibia, like many post-colonial African countries, made it a priority to restructure and transform its education system in line with its new education philosophy of access, equity, quality and democracy. One of the fundamental focuses of the school management systems has been the decentralization of authority or devolving authority from the Ministry of Education to the regional office, from the regional office to the principals, and from the principals to the teachers.

Post-bureaucratic models of management stress the importance of lateral relationship (Bush 1993:12). To this end the emphasis has shifted to the empowerment of teachers and a commitment to shared decision-making rather than on power derived from a hierarchical position. In order to achieve meaningful and constructive change, schools need to create a management culture in which the individuals feel that they are able to meaningfully participate in decision-making without fear and prejudice.

Participative management has been widely promoted as a means of formalizing a new conceptualisation of management to bring about school improvement (Johnson & Ledbetter, 1993). Leonard (1993:45) argues that the assumptions underlying this devolution and redistribution of decision-making authority are that greater ownership, morale and commitment among stakeholders will result, and that decisions made at the local level “are likely to be more responsive to the specific, individual school context”.

Toward education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training (MBEC 1993), is a statement of vision and policy which translates the Namibian philosophy on education into concrete and implementable government structures. With regard to the democratisation of the education system, it contends that:

In order to teach democracy, our teachers, and our education system as a whole must practise democracy. A democratic education system is organised around broad participation in decision-making and the clear accountability of those that are our leaders. It is to be clear that Namibians work diligently and consistently

to facilitate broad participation in making the major decisions about our education and how to implement them.

The restructuring of education in Namibia was realized by replacing the segregated and fragmented education system of the pre-independence Apartheid South Africa with a unified system of education under the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture.

There was a growing realisation that educational institutions cannot remain static entities in the fast-changing world, and this implies a whole new challenge for educational leaders, especially school principals, as they constantly work under unfamiliar and turbulent conditions. Principals, as the key persons in the restructuring and transformation of the school system, have been increasingly under pressure to adopt participative modes of decision-making. This was realized by the establishment of the School Board with the aim to promote accountability and active participation of all stakeholders in education.

In the Namibian context the transformation of education resulted in a paradigm shift in the management of education. This means a new way of doing things, which requires a complete reconceptualisation of management, for which many of our principals are ill prepared. School principals are viewed as gatekeepers of change and a key factor in the implementation process, but unfortunately many of them find themselves unable to cope in a school environment that has become substantially different from the one in which they gained their experience.

Research goals

Thus my research goals are:

To investigate three secondary school principals' perceptions of participative management.

To gain insight into and understanding of the dimensions involved in participative management, from the perspective of three school principals.

Methodology

Orientations to research in the human sciences may vary across a range of understandings of reality and learning about reality. Within this range, the orientation that best aligns with my research goals is that of interpretivism. To the interpretive researcher the purpose of research is to describe and interpret the phenomena of the world in order to develop a shared meaning with others. Interpretation is a search for deep perspectives on particular events and for theoretical insights. It may offer possibilities, but no certainty as to the outcomes of future events (Bassey 1995).

According to Cohen & Manion (2000:36) the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. Cantrell (1993: 84) further asserts that this paradigm allows a researcher to understand the situation of the phenomena and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context of the natural setting.

In my quest to understand the meanings the three principals attached to participative management in their natural settings I embarked on a multiple case study approach as a method of research. Case studies provide unique examples of real people in real situations, enabling the readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles.

The sampling approach was a combination of convenience and self-selection sampling (Cohen & Manion 2000:102). Of the six schools in the town (Gobabis), three are secondary schools. Since my interest is in management at high school level, I decided to select all three high schools, which are conveniently situated near me, thereby saving money and time.

Data were acquired by employing three different data collecting techniques viz. questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observation. The questionnaires were the principal data-collecting tool. Interviews were used to supplement data and probe issues raised in the questionnaires more deeply. I tape recorded all my interviews and transcribed them in full. Observations afforded me the opportunity to gather “live” data from “live” situations by attending a management meeting at two of the schools.

With regard to data analysis I first immersed myself in the data. With my research question in mind I developed themes that formed the basis of my discussions. Data from both the questionnaires and interviews were discussed simultaneously, while data from observations were included wherever they were relevant to the themes identified.

Structure of my thesis

Chapter two presents an overview of the literature on participative management, with particular reference to the earlier management theories, new management theories, theories on participation, participation from a global perspective, participative decision-making and education, as well as the Namibian experience of participation.

Chapter three is devoted in more detail to the methodology I have employed in my research.

Chapter four presents data analysis and discussion of my main findings in the light of the literature.

Chapter five is devoted to a summary of my main findings, recommendations both for practice and research, as well as the limitations of my research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A shift in educational management over the past decade has been the movement toward participation and empowerment, involving employees at all levels of the organisation in the decision-making process. Political transformation is rooted in the principles of democratic governance and policy options that allow the greatest possible participation of legitimate stakeholders in the affairs of schools in Namibia, and in other African countries. This chapter explores and reviews a body of scholarship on participative management and leadership as a means of illuminating the development of the concept of employees' participation over the years.

Why management *and* leadership?

It is important at the outset to distinguish between the terms 'leadership' and 'management', since they are used by many writers as either interchangeable or synonymous. It is, however, not my intention to treat the two concepts synonymously, but to regard them as two different, yet complementary activities, existing side by side in a mutual, logical relationship.

Leadership is one of the most extensively researched topics in behavioural science and yet its dimensions are quite complex and difficult to define. This could partly be ascribed to the fact that leadership is a dynamic form of behaviour with many variables coming into play, which affect the nature of leadership relationship.

Mullins (1993: 75) sees leadership as the relationship through which one person influences the behaviour of their people, and this relationship is reciprocal, influencing both the individual and the organisational performance, resulting in an effective team building spirit.

Van der Westhuizen (1999: 55), defines management as follows:

Management is a specific type of work in education which comprises those regulative tasks and actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field or area of regulation, so as to allow formative education to take place.

Contrasting leadership and management, Nanus (1992: 11) draws a dichotomy from a book by Warren Bennis (1989) *On becoming a leader*, suggesting that:

The manager administers, the leader innovates, the manager relies on control, and the leader inspires, the manager focuses on systems and structure and the leader focuses on people.

The above quotation treats management and leadership as completely different activities, suggesting that there are no areas of overlap between the two. It assumes for example that only leaders innovate, and not managers. This, in my view is not always the case, as we might find managers who also innovate.

Schmuck (as cited by Van der Mescht, 1996: 15) is in favour of a more holistic, multi-faceted perspective:

Administrators should combine both leadership and management skills into their repertoire...leadership brings the energy, enthusiasm and commitment ...management brings the efficiency, the concern with detail and coordination...

My research will take this route, drawing on both management and leadership theories in a mutual dialogical relation.

My point of departure will be to trace the development of participative management from early management theories, starting with the contribution of the scientific management approach to participation, after which I will proceed to explore the new management theories of the early 1970s.

The second part will attempt to explore the different theories of participation as advocated by different researchers, followed by a brief global perspective on participation (how different countries view participation).

The last section will be devoted to participative management from an educational perspective in general, and in particular the Namibian experience of participative management.

Management theories

Early management theories

The concept of employee participation has, since the beginning of the early 20th century, received its initial attention from the rise of the scientific management movement spearheaded by Frederick Winslow Taylor, who may rightly be called the father of this school of thought. In his much revered *Principles of scientific management* (1911) he acknowledged that workers bring skills to the job and learn skills on the job that allow them to make independent decisions about the best way to accomplish work. He noted:

Foremen and superintendents know better than anyone else that their own knowledge and personal skills fall short of the combined knowledge and dexterity of all the workmen under them. The most experienced managers therefore frankly place before their workmen the problem of doing the work in the best and most economical way (Taylor 1911: 22-23).

As the above suggests, it is clear that the concept of participation had a place in the scientific management approach, although not conspicuous and clear-cut. If indeed the “foreman and superintendents know better than anyone else that their own skills fall short of the combined knowledge and dexterity of all the workmen under them”, this, in my view, is an acknowledgement on the part of Taylor of the potential and abilities of the workmen that could be utilised to the benefit of the organisation. However, as might be expected, given the prevailing social, economic, and political culture of that time, this aspect of management thinking was not implemented at management level, because Taylor recognised the potential for chaos that such independent worker-thinking might present to management, who were only interested in creating predictable organisational outcomes. He opted for autonomous decision-making in the hands of the managers only.

Based on the above, I am tempted to agree with Abzug et al. (1998) who maintained that despite recent academic and popular writings hailing empowerment and participation as the latest management tools, they actually pre-date most of our modern management ideas by

almost half a century. What is praised as fundamentally 'new management practice' is essentially the re-adapting of existing 'old management truths'.

Taylor's training and background as an apprentice, clerk, foreman and later as an engineer, gave him the idea that workers could be programmed like machines to carry out their task as effectively as possible. He believed that workers were generally lazy and that only force and economic incentives would make them productive. He further advocated

a systematic system of working practices to discover the most efficient means of performing every task and a corresponding study of management to determine the most efficient means of controlling workers (Hughes, 1985:4).

The scientific management approach received much criticism because it was an oversimplification and a one-sided view of humanity. The approach ignored the human element, thus regarding people only as rational beings who could be trained and 'programmed' to operate as machines in order to increase productivity. It was further characterised by the increasingly specialised division of labour in society, which generated a hierarchy of authority and a system of rule. This resulted in the emergence of a particular type of organisational culture called bureaucracy, spearheaded by the sociologist Max Weber. This process of bureaucratisation has become broadly recognised as "...the defining characteristic of modern industrial society" (Haralambos and Holborn, 1980:406) Consequently the metaphor, 'man as a machine,' came to underlie the whole management approach and was further complemented by the work of people like Henry Fayol, Lyndall Urwick and Luther Gulick (Hughes, 1985: 12)

The Hawthorne experiment of Elton Mayo in 1945 could be regarded as pioneering work from which the human relations approach and the concept of worker participation more clearly developed. Initially the experiment was aimed at testing the effect of workers' conditions on their productivity. However, what emerged unexpectedly from this experiment was the finding that simply paying positive attention to people's psychological factors in an organisation could result in increased productivity, hence the 'Hawthorne effect'. It affirms that workers will be more productive if the intrinsic as well as the extrinsic factors are given attention in their motivation to work. Work as such should be able to satisfy some of the workers' basic psychosocial needs, including affiliation, power and self-esteem. The

experiment resulted in a shift in emphasis in the relationship between management and workers and a change in focus from the individual worker to the worker as a member of various informal social groups within an organisation.

A major contribution to the human relations approach was made by Mary Parker Follett (in Hoy and Miskel, 1996: 12) who maintained that the fundamental problem of any organisation was the building and maintaining of healthy, dynamic human relations. In my view these sentiments relate to Dinkmeyer (1996: 54) who refers to it as “human capital”, based on the belief that people are the primary resources for any organisation, hence they cannot be considered as mere cogs in corporate wheels.

The social science approach, spearheaded, among others, by Chester Barnard (in Hoy and Miskel 1996:16) and Parsons (in Hoy and Miskel 1996:16), added another dimension to the concept of employees’ participation. Unlike scientific management thinking, which regarded organisations as closed systems, the social science approach stressed the importance of the effect of the environment on the organisation and anticipated a conception of the organisation as an open system. According to Barnard (in Hoy and Miskel 1996:17) an open system is a social system based on the assumptions that organisations, like schools, are dependent on and influenced by their external environment, for example the community and non-governmental organisations. The external environment affects the internal structure and processes of the organisation and vice versa.

In his book *Functions of the Executive* (1938) Barnard offered a view of organisations that lasted well beyond its original formulation and is, in my view, highly relevant to our present management needs. He offered, as an alternative way of thinking about leadership in the workplace, a definition of the formal organisation in terms of the cooperation it elicited among members. According to him ‘the executive’ is such a system, a facilitator of cooperation. In his own words he observed that:

The executive functions serve to maintain a system of cooperative effort... The functions are not, as frequently stated, to manage a group of persons. I do not think a correct understanding of executive work can be had if this narrower, convenient, but strictly speaking erroneous, conception obtains. It is not even correct to say that the executive functions are to manage the system of cooperative efforts. As a whole, it is managed by itself, not by the executive organisation, which [are] part of it. The functions with which we are concerned

are like those of the nervous system, including the brain, in relation to the rest of the body. It exists to maintain the bodily system by directing those actions which are necessarily more effective to adjust to the environment, but it can hardly be said to manage the body, a large part of whose functions are independent of it and upon which it in turn depends.

It is clear from the quotation that Barnard managed to move beyond the control notion of Taylor by offering a theoretical basis for leadership, which I take to be consistent with today's paradigmatic shift toward participation in the workplace.

New management thinking

From the 1970s onwards, organisational management has undergone profound upheavals and structural transformation because of the complexity, technological innovations, conflicts and ambiguity that characterize many present day organisations. Organisations are no longer seen as rational, with no regard for external influence, but rather dynamic and receptive to external influences. Modern management thinking begins to put the individual and all his/her complexity at the centre-stage of organisational and leadership enquiry. To this end, new concepts like culture (Schein, 1985) community (Sergiovanni, 1994) and subjectivity (Greenfield, 1984) have started to emerge to examine the invisible forces underlying the complex nature of human interactions.

Schein (1985: 12) defined culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned...” This definition has a participative overtone, since shared assumptions are the result of socialisation and integration of particular group members. On a slightly different tack Sergiovanni (1994), posited that in communities the source of authority for leadership is embedded in shared ideas, and shared ideas are the result of socialisation. In support of his argument he wrote:

In communities, for example, the connection of people to purposes and the connections among people are not based on contracts but on commitments. Communities are socially organised around relationships and the felt interdependencies that nurture them. Instead of being tied together and tied to purposes by bartering arrangements, this social structure bonds people together in special ways and bind them to concepts, images, and values that comprise a shared idea structure. Communities are defined by their centres of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of ‘we’ from the collection of ‘I’s.

Greenfield's (1984: 150) subjectivism was an attack on the objective approach, which perceives organisations as distinct from the actions, feelings and purposes of people. He regarded organisations as 'non-natural realities' and 'cultural artefacts', seeing leadership as the product of the will and imagination of individuals as they try to construct the social world for others. According to Greenfield, organisations are the products of culture and we can only better understand them if we understand the culture in which they are embedded. Culture, as stated above, is a socialisation and interactive process that presupposes participation.

It was thus only in the early 1980s that the concepts of empowerment and participation were given prominence and emphasis as a means of improving effectiveness in organisations. However, the groundwork had been laid by the earlier management theories.

Theories on participative-leadership styles

In any organisational leadership the determination whether to be 'tight' and assign goals and objectives within a team unit by oneself, or to be 'loose' and allow employees to participate freely in these processes, is not an easy one. In trying to explain the difficulty involved in choosing the right and appropriate style McClelland (cited in Sagie & Kolowsky, 2000: 55) wrote:

How much initiative he [the leader] would take, how persuasive he should attempt to be, and at what point his clear enthusiasm for certain goals becomes personal authoritarian insistence that those goals are the right ones whatever the members of the group may think, are all questions calculated to frustrate the well-intentioned leader. If he takes no initiative, he is no leader. If he takes too much, he becomes a dictator, particularly if he tries to curtail the process by which members of the group participate in shaping the group's goals...he may almost imperceptibly change from a democratic to an authoritarian leader.

The following discussion looks at some of the leadership styles and theories in the literature that have a bearing on participation and empowering of employees. In doing so, I want to trace the different theories on participation over the years and show how they eventually came

to shape our understanding of participative management in contemporary educational management.

The classification of leadership styles is not an easy task to accomplish and in this regard Van der Mescht states “classifying leadership in terms of styles seems to have its origin in research conducted by Lewin, Lippitt and White in 1938” (Sashkin & Lassey, 1983:95). The central question they wanted an answer to was: whether participative (or democratic) leadership as compared to directive (or autocratic) leadership led their teams to higher achievement and higher levels of job satisfaction. In the writings of Lewin on “group atmosphere” he distinguished among autocratic, laissez faire and democratic leadership styles, the latter being identified as essentially participatory (Lewin, Lippitt & White, in Sagie *et al.*, 2000: 56). The autocratic leadership style is fed by Douglas McGregor’s notion of Theory X , which assumes that people have an inherent dislike for work, requiring them to be forced, controlled and directed towards performing constructive work, that the average human being prefers to avoid responsibility and has little ambition. On the other hand, one can reasonably conclude that the more optimistic Theory Y (cited in Gordon, 1983: 205), as described by McGregor, is fundamentally linked to the democratic or participative management procedures, since it postulates that people are essentially hard-working and keen to take responsibility.

Lewin’s theory of three distinct leadership styles (referred to above) was based on the following four major assumptions and propositions: firstly, it assumed that, similar to personality traits, leadership styles are relatively stable and constant across different situations; secondly, it assumed that style is unidimensional, meaning that an autocratic leader concentrates all authority or power in his/her hand, a laissez faire leader relinquishes all his/her power to subordinates, and a democratic leader shares power with followers, regardless of context and circumstances; thirdly, that the democratic style is the most beneficial of all the styles; and lastly, the impact of participative decision-making (PDM) on work outcome was presumed to be unconditional, that is the model supported the notion that moderators could not affect that impact.

However, no conclusive agreement could be reached, because it is difficult to have empirical evidence which clearly shows a strong link between these leadership styles and high level of achievement. Although Lewin’s theory has received much criticism, it laid the foundation and provided the impetus for further research on participation.

In the following discussion, attention will be given to some theories which show a high degree of agreement with the Lewin theory, followed by theories that seem to challenge its premise. This will hopefully shed more light on the complexity of participation in leadership styles.

Behaviourist theories on participative leadership

Likert's system theory - 1967

In principle, Likert adopted all four presumptions advocated by Lewin, but with some modifications (as cited in Sagie *et al.* 2000: 58). He distinguished between two levels within direction and two levels within participation. This resulted in the bi-polar direction-participation to include four elements, which represent the organisational systems.

System 1 - represents an exploitative autocratic leadership

System 2 - represents a benevolent autocratic or paternalistic type of leadership, which makes most of the decisions, but allows some degree of flexibility on the part of the subordinates in job performances.

System 3 - represents a consultative leadership, during which the leader makes most of the decisions, but only after consulting with the subordinates

System 4 - represents participative leadership. In this case the employees are involved in making most of the work-related decisions based on superior knowledge, rather than on position.

The Ohio State leadership model

This theory has much in common with the bi-dimensional model of leadership adopted by Lewin, with two noticeable exceptions: it rejected the assumption that only one style, the participative decision-making (PDM) style, is universally superior to other styles of leadership. It further rejected the unidimensional characterization of leadership. To this end the researchers from the Bureau of Business research at Ohio State University postulated the existence of two relatively independent leadership dimensions viz. 'initiating structure', which is the degree to which leaders structure subordinates objectives, roles and tasks; and

secondly 'consideration', that is the degree to which leaders trust their subordinates and have respect for their feelings and ideas (Sagie and Koslowsky, 2000: 59) The first dimension was equated with direction and the second with participative decision making. These researchers maintained that initiating structure and consideration should not be regarded as two opposites, but rather leadership styles of leaders should be seen as a combination of both dimensions, for example the combination of low initiating structure and low consideration was considered to be the poorest leadership style and vice versa. This task-person tension has dominated leadership and management research for decades.

Blake & Mouton leadership grid

The leadership grid of Blake and Mouton (in Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000: 59) is an extension of the ideas of the Ohio state leadership model. However, here initiating structure was replaced by production (parallel to direction), and consideration replaced by concern for people (parallel to PDM). Another interesting addition were the nine levels for each dimension instead of merely the two advocated by the Ohio model. According to this model, the mode (average) score of any typical organisation is about 5.5 and with things being equal (organisational characteristics and situations) the 'perfect' score of 9.9 is achievable.

Unlike the unidimensional leadership conceptualisation as advocated by Lewin, the bidimensional portrayal of leadership by both the Ohio state researchers and Blake and Mouton is helpful in enhancing our understanding of the relationship between participative decision-making and direction.

We now turn our discussion to those theories which were in complete disagreement with Lewin's unidimensional approach. In contrast to Lewin's understanding of leadership style as a stable force, these theories were based on the idea that several variables, many of them situational in nature, play a role in the relationship between leader practices (styles) and workers' outcomes. These intervening variables determine which practice, participative decision-making or direction, is more appropriate in a given situation.

Situational leadership theory - Hersey & Blanchard - 1988

The situational theory is behavioural rather than attitudinal. It refers more to the actions than to the feelings, values and norms of the leader. According to this model, it is important for the leader to consider the stages of organisational development (readiness, or maturity) of each member, and to adjust his/her style of leadership to the task readiness level of each staff member, resulting in the development of staff members. Task relevant readiness is the ability to determine high but realistic objectives for a specific task, to be willing and able to accept responsibility for tasks and to have the necessary training. Hersey & Blanchard (in Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 82) distinguished between positional power (degree to which a leader is successful in rewarding, punishing etc.) and personal power (the degree to which a leader is successful in gaining respect and trust). Furthermore they distinguished four basic leadership styles, viz.

Telling style: This style is characterized by high degree of directive and low degree of supportive behaviour.

Selling style: Both directive and supportive behaviour are high.

Participating style: High degree of supportive and low degree of directive behaviour.

Delegating style: Both directive and supportive behaviour are low (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 82).

It follows that situational theory presupposes that a leader should determine the style which suits a particular situation, and that a person should be placed in a situation which best suits his/her style. What is noteworthy is that this theory directly addresses the notion of participation on a continuum, from a low level (telling) to the highest level (delegation).

The path-goal theory of leadership - House - 1971

According to this theory the leader initiates structures in the work environment and clarifies for subordinates the path leading to performance goals so that the likelihood of personal payoffs is increased. To accomplish this, the leader adopts a certain style of leadership compatible with the given situation. This practice includes the following: (a) directive (or initiating structure) (b) participative (c) supportive and (d) achievement-oriented (Sagie *et al.*, 2000: 61).

The first two practices deal with the leader-member interaction with regard to decision-making, while the latter two are primarily concerned with the attainment of these decisions and goals. For example, when a leader uses the achievement-oriented practice, the leader encourages his or her subordinates to achieve challenging goals, and when employing the supportive practice, the leader helps the workers to perform well by establishing good relations and showing interest in the workers. The theory further distinguished between two sets of contingency variables viz. subordinate characteristics, which focus on the ability and locus of control, and organisational characteristics, which focus on the nature of the task to be performed and the extent of clarity and predictability in the work environment. The more predictable the environment, the more participation he or she will allow, and the less predictable the more directive the leader will tend to be. Again, participation is presented as a variable rather than static dimension of leadership: the degree is dependent on followers' readiness as well as predictability of the context.

Fiedler's contingency theory of leadership - 1967

Fiedler distinguished three situational moderators that determine which kind of leader; either task (direction) or relationship-oriented (participation) fits a particular situation:

Leader-member relation (good/poor), whether or not members accept the leader, have confidence, trust and respect him or her.

Members' task (structured/unstructured), whether or not the task objective and requirements are clearly defined.

Leader's positional power (high or low), whether or not the leader has power and influence over rewards and punishment (in Sagie *et al.* 2000:61).

The most favourable situation would be when the leader-member relations are good, members' tasks are structured and the leader's positional power is high. To this end, Fiedler concluded that the most appropriate and effective leader practice in either the very favourable or the very unfavourable situation is task oriented and the most effective practice in moderately favourable situations is relationship-oriented.

Vroom and Jago normative model - 1988

This theory posited that when a leader is facing a problem requiring a decision, then the situational variables, rather than the personality traits, determine the appropriate style chosen from the range between highly directive (or autocratic) or highly participative.

Furthermore Vroom and Jago (in Sagie *et al.* 2000: 63) identified five leadership practices, which include two varieties of autocracy (AI and AII), two varieties of consultation (CI and CII), and one variety of participation-based leadership (GI):

- AI-Implies that the leader makes decisions on his or her own, based on the available information.
- AII-Implies that the leader obtains the necessary information from the subordinates and then makes decisions alone.
- CI-In this case the leader shares the problem with the relevant subordinates individually and then makes decisions alone.
- CII-The leader shares the problem with a group of subordinates and then makes the decision alone.
- GI-The leader shares the problem with the group and both parties make the decision.

Accordingly, the theory postulates that the situational attributes, which are based on prior expectation, determine whether a leader would proceed away from or toward participative decision-making.

The cognitive resource theory of leadership

This is another approach to leadership suggested by Fiedler (in Sagie *et al.*, 2000: 64), and it focused on leader 'defectiveness'. The theory implies that before a leader could make a decision he or she has to check who among the group has mastered the required knowledge, either the leader himself/herself or a team member. In the case where the leader possesses enough knowledge on a particular subject then direction is more appropriate. On the other hand, if the members of the team are more knowledgeable and competent with respect to the problem in hand, than a nondirective approach (e.g. participation) is preferred. One

shortcoming of this theory is the lack of guidelines in cases where the leader cannot identify the expert party in advance.

The theory of loose-tight leadership

The underlying principle of this theory is that the leader's direction and the participation of members can be seen as two important components of leader-member interaction that complement each other. The leader is associated with the framework of the interaction and the member with the substance. According to this theory, a loose-tight leader initiates problem-oriented dialogues, elicits employee ideas and suggestions, requires solutions and reports of progress, urges and pushes to get them completed in time, ensures that the responses are aligned with the underlying vision and provide members with feedback. It further advocates that the substance of the decisions in every phase of the work process is open to worker involvement (Sagie *et al.*, 2000: 68).

Summative thoughts

On balance these theories seem satisfying, and succeed in developing Lewin's apparently simplistic categorisation of leadership into three styles. They develop the notion of several variables (context, readiness of followers, and difficulty of task) bearing on leadership behaviour, so that the notion of participation is appropriately problematised. However, the theories have little to offer in terms of enhancing one's understanding and perception of participative management as a human, lived endeavour. Clearly research within behaviourist perspectives excels at producing neat formulae, but falls short in capturing the complexity of what a phenomenon may mean from a multidimensional perspective. To achieve this, one would need to unlock the thinking, reasoning, and understanding of individual leaders within their peculiar settings. Nevertheless, the theories have laid the foundation of our present management and leadership thinking with regard to participative management.

Contemporary post-behaviourist theories move much more closely towards embracing participative management approaches as human activity rather than 'scientific' behaviour. Examples of these are discussed below.

Contemporary approaches to participation in leadership

Participation, direction and transformational leadership

The theory of transformational (or charismatic) leadership (Bass, 1985, Burns, 1978, cited in Sagie *et al.*, 2000: 67) holds that transformational leaders “elevate the needs of the follower in line with the leader’s own goals and objectives...[followers] place a great deal of trust and confidence in the vision and values espoused by the leader”. In contrast to a strictly centralized perspective, the transformational leader has a clear participative orientation. According to Conger *et al.* (cited in Sergiovanni, 1991:78) the leader encourages the followers to openly question his or her ideas and develops their capabilities to make decisions and to influence the organisational policies, which is not typical of the ordinary (or transactional) leader. Tichy and Devanna (cited in Sagie, 2000) maintained that transformational leadership is both directive and participative.

Constructivist leadership

The notion of constructivist leadership takes participation to its ultimate limit, virtually denying the role of leadership altogether. Lambert *et al.* (1995: 11) define constructivist leadership as the reciprocal learning process that enables participants in a community to construct meaning towards a shared purposes, and the process of making sense of our work together is referred to as constructivist learning. Leadership in this context is viewed as learning among adults in a community that shares goals and vision. Lambert’s (1998: 17) view on leadership is captured as follows:

When we think about leadership we are accustomed to picturing people in roles with formal authority, such as principals, directors or superintendents, but we can view leadership as a verb, rather than a noun, by considering the processes, activities and relationships in which people engage, rather than as individuals in a specific role.

The key word here is ‘relationships’. Within a school context, the constructivist leader facilitates the learning process that enables participants in a community to construct meaning - to learn together - which ultimately leads to a shared purpose of schooling. To facilitate

shared and reciprocal learning, principals need to explicitly release authority, and staff members need to learn how to enhance personal and collective power and informal authority.

According to Lambert (1998:18) leadership as learning involves these assumptions:

- Leadership is not a trait: 'leadership' and 'leader' are not the same. A leader is anyone who engages in the work of leadership.
- Leadership is about learning that leads to constructive change.
- Everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader.
- Leading is a shared endeavour, the foundation for the democratisation of schools.
- Leadership requires the distribution of power and authority.

In conclusion, the various theories outlined above presented the complex nature of participative decision-making (PDM). Several complementing and controversial issues were highlighted, one being the issue of whether the conduct of the leader is stable and determined by his or her style, or whether it varies in accordance with the situation. Based on the foregoing expositions of the theories I would share the views of most of the research findings that support the more complex modes of participative decision-making (which argue that the leader's conduct is bidimensional or situational) over the one-dimensional models advocated by Lewin. The extreme multi-dimensionality of transformational and constructive leadership perhaps comes closer to capturing how participative leadership works in reality.

Participative management - a global perspective

Cottons' (cited in Sagie *et al.*, 2000: 231) summary of cross-cultural studies, involving managers from the United States, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, on participation states:

The findings indicated that managers in the Netherlands viewed participation as a social obligation, while the Americans managers saw it as a means of improving performance. Managers in Britain viewed participation as a threat to management control...as a means of increasing performance. American managers focused on formal programs (such as self-directed work teams) to promote involvement and improve productivity. The Dutch and British managers did not understand this, but for different reasons. For the Dutch

managers involvement was already assured through work councils; for the British managers involvement was not desired.

At the end of the 20th century, the concept of participative decision-making represents a major organisational upheaval and structural transformation, with wide ranging implications. This could be attributed to the concept of democracy that has penetrated not only the political systems but all spheres of social, civic and organisational life.

According to Brouillette (cited in Somech, 2002) participative management is a concept surrounded by confusion, despite much thought and activity. Sagie and Koslowsky (2000) share the same sentiment, arguing that despite the growth of participation and empowerment ideals, a participative perspective has often proved to be difficult to implement successfully. The effectiveness of the use of a participative/empowerment approach to management has not matched its popularity.

It is, however, evident from the words of Cotton above that different nations attach different meanings to the concept of participative management, and that a meaning assigned to the concept in one country may be completely foreign to people in another country. According to the American perspective, PDM is defined as an organisational process by which managers share influence on decision-making between hierarchical superiors and subordinates (Wagner & Gooding, 1987b), meaning that PDM is regarded as a work- or organisation-centred process, based on a direct interaction. The Western European perception of PDM is more employee-centred, whereby workers are indirectly involved on issues that affect them. In the African/traditional societies participative practices are mostly imitated but not internalised. According to Selmer and De Leon (cited in Koslowsky, 2000: 10), workers in traditional societies do not really practise teamwork (participation) outside their family units. Normally, workers honour the authority of directive or paternalistic leaders, while leaders do not consider the reduction of the power distance between themselves and their subordinates to be legitimate. Autocratic, rather than participative, leadership is deeply rooted in their thinking about who should and who should not be in charge: "They often see participation as too 'soft' and therefore, not as 'true' leadership practice and thus often have modest expectations from its applications" (Sagie, 1997).

Participative decision-making and education

Much of the current second wave of educational reform has been couched in the language of teacher participation and empowerment. At the national and state levels, policymakers and advocates have called for the development of collegial, professional modes for teachers' work and greater involvement of teachers in decisions that affect their work (Carnegie, 1986). In the last few years, the momentum of reform initiatives geared towards the realisations of these principles has grown tremendously.

The interest in empowerment in education has, as a point of origin, the business and industrial efforts to improve productivity. Kanungo (1992: 414) cited alienation at work as

the most pervasive phenomenon of the post-industrial society ... management in both private and public sectors are engaged in a constant struggle against it for their own survival.

According to Kanungo (Ibid.), alienated workers are apathetic, frustrated, and uninvolved in their work. Organisations can counter workers' alienation with empowerment plans to improve their position to compete with firms or organisations that have these problems. The principal strategy is to replace authority-based management with participative management.

As I have shown, participative management is not new in literature, but this concept has captured the interest of many managers, in both the private and public institutions, within the last decade. Among educators, the interest has been stimulated by a number of factors:

- A deeply rooted and growing discontent with leadership in educational institutions
- The apparent dysfunction of bureaucratic systems
- The apparent success of participative management in Japanese and American Industries and in a growing number of school systems
- The endorsement of the team concept by professional associations of school administrators; and a growing body of evidence from research that reveals significant advantages attributable to participative decision-making (Cawelti, 1978)

What is participative management?

Although the word ‘participation’ has been with mankind for such a long time, and is so widely used by writers on management areas, it still remains difficult to precisely define what it means. Even in the 1970s – when behavioural scientists were attempting to develop clear theories - McGregor (cited in Pateman, 1970:67) saw participation as one of the most misunderstood ideas that have emerged from the field of human relations. The problem arises as a result of the wide meaning attached to it, in which it tends to cover almost any given situation, even if minimal interaction has taken place. Nevertheless, the concept of PDM is a popular topic in education management, as the following brief account shows.

Contemporary education trends have incorporated empowerment strategies as a means of improving school effectiveness. The central idea is that those close to teaching should make decisions about teaching. Stevenson provides an overview of this tendency in education management, citing several different theorists’ descriptions: school-based management (Parchiardinis), school-site management (Mitchell & Beach), collegiality (Jenkins) and participative management (Stevenson, 2000, cited in Somech, 2002).

Participative management has been widely promoted as a means of formalizing a new conceptualisation of management to bring about school improvement (Johnson & Ledbetter, 1993). Leonard (1993: 45) argues that the assumptions underlying this devolution and redistribution of decision-making authority are that greater ownership, morale, and commitment among stakeholders will result, and that decisions made at the local level “are likely to be more responsive to the specific individual school context.”

Lomec et al. (cited in Sagie *et al.*, 2000: 58) believe that the participative management process is a powerful antidote to employees’ complacency and failures in organisation. Participative management unleashes the knowledge and skills of people who are doing the actual work of the organisation. The goal of participative management is to tap the unique resources of each of these individuals, create a collaborative learning experience, and produce results that are far greater than the sum of the individual. The benefits far outweigh the risks

and problems, and the destination for any organisation is always worth the cost of the trip - no matter how you measure success.

Hargreaves (cited in Somech, 2002: 342) postulates that the increasing emergence of participative management in schools reflects the widely shared belief that flatter management and decentralized authority structures carry the potential for achieving outcomes unattainable by the traditional top-down bureaucratic structure of schools. The belief that changes at the classroom levels would improve student outcomes has been replaced by the theory that embraces school governance systems to improve effectiveness at all levels, including the classroom.

According to Dimmock (1993: 59) school-based management demands greater participation by staff and parents in the policy and decision-making processes of the school. Relevant stakeholders make decisions in school-based management collectively and collegially, not individually through the principal and/or deputy principal of the school. Principals liaise and interact with the consultative groups and attend to the interpersonal dynamics of the collaborative process (Chapman, 1992, cited in Dimmock, 1993:59).

Crane (1976) has defined participative management as a management approach, which allows and encourages subordinates to participate in decisions that affect them. Lowin's study (cited in Dunstan, 1981) describes participative management as an organisational operation by which decisions are arrived at, by including those persons who are to execute those decisions. Patterns, Purkey and Parker (cited in Rice & Schneider, 1994) concluded that putting decision-making power as close to the point of delivery as possible makes implementation of those decisions not only possible, but successful. Erickson and Gwelch (1977) indicated that the overall benefits of adopting a team management approach to school governance include improving the quality of communications and decision-making practices, staff motivation, and the enhanced coordination of tasks and plans.

By involving workers in organisational decisions, management reflects recognition and trust. As French, Israel, and As (cited in Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000:20) argued:

When management accords the workers participation in any important decision, it implies that workers are intelligent, competent, and valued partners. Thus

participation directly affects such aspect of worker-management relations as the perception of being valued, the perception of common goals, and cooperation. It satisfies such important social needs as the need for recognition and appreciation and the need for independence.

It is however, evident from the foregoing definitions that researchers approach participative management from a single-dimensional perspective viz. the decision domain. Brouillette (1997, cited in Somech 2002) criticized this trend in literature when he argued that, although recently some studies have begun to explore the conceptualisation of the construct itself, no consensus as yet exists on the nature and meaning of participative management. Most studies do not define dimensions of participation, but examine participative management as a generic construct (Alutto & Belasco, 1972), meaning that researchers explore participative management as an aggregate organisational characteristic, which will allow for wider generalisations about organisations and their characteristics. This tendency has the potential of presenting an oversimplified picture, which could prevent an understanding of how participative management varies across different contexts and contents. For example, a principal may reserve certain decisions for him- or herself, while allowing participation in others.

My research will be based on the foregoing argument, in that it will explore participative management from a multi-dimensional perspective. It will endeavour to investigate the three principals' perspectives of participative management as well as attempting to glean an insight and understanding of the different dimensions involved, from the perspective of each individual principal

The Namibian experience

School reform has become a buzzword in international education circles, with various demands being made on education to change, revitalize, restructure and reform. Many countries have instituted educational reforms and will continue to do so, and Namibia is no exception. Restructuring includes the decentralization of organisation, management, and governing of schools, empowerment of those closest to the students in the classroom and the creation of new roles and responsibilities for all the role players in the system.

Hargreaves (1994: 260) describes the need for educational change as follows:

The challenge of restructuring in education and elsewhere is a challenge of abandoning or attenuating bureaucratic controls, inflexible mandates, paternalistic forms of trust and quick system fixes in order to hear, articulate and bring together the disparate voices of teachers and other educational partners (particularly students and their parents). It is a challenge of opening up broad avenues of choice, which respect teachers' professional discretion and enhance their decision-making capacity. It is a challenge of building trust in the process of collaboration, risk and continuous improvement, as well as more traditional trust in people. And it is a challenge of supporting and empowering school cultures and those involved in them to develop changes themselves on a continuous basis.

Changes taking place in the Namibian education system confirm and reflect most of the theoretical trends outlined in the previous discussions. After independence, Namibia, like many post-colonial African countries, made it a priority to transform its education system in line with its new education philosophy of access, equity, quality and democracy. *Towards Education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training* (MBEC, 1993), is a statement of vision which translates the Namibian philosophy on education into concrete and implementable government policies. With regard to the democratisation of the education system it states:

In order to teach about democracy, our teachers, and our education system as a whole, must practise democracy. A democratic education system is organised around broad participation in decision-making and the clear accountability of those that are our leaders. That is not to say that every decision in the school must be subjected to a vote or that the role of the youngster will be identical to those of their parents. Rather it is to be clear that Namibians work diligently and consistently to facilitate broad participation in making the major decisions about our education and how to implement them. In schools that are responsive to their community, parents and neighbours are not regarded as unwelcome outsiders. Instead the schools are organized to enable them to be active participants in school governance, active contributors to discussions of school management and administration, and active evaluators of the quality of instruction and learning. In democratic education for democratic society teachers must be active creators and managers of the learning environment and not its masters or caretakers (MBEC, 1993:42)

This restructuring was realised by replacing the segregated and fragmented education system of the pre-independence apartheid South Africa with a unified system of education under the Ministry of Education and Culture. There was a growing realisation that educational institutions cannot remain static entities in the fast changing world, and this implies a whole

new challenge for educational leaders, especially the school principals, as they constantly work under unfamiliar and turbulent conditions. The principals, as the key persons in the transformation and restructuring of the school system, became increasingly pressured to adopt participative modes of decision making. This was realised by the establishment of School Boards through the School Bill of 2001, with the aim to promote accountability of, and active participation of all the stakeholders in education. In fact the school board can be regarded as the best example of grassroots democracy in action. In the Namibian context the transformation of education resulted in a paradigm shift in the management of education. This means a new way of doing things, which requires a complete reconceptualisation of management, for which many of our teachers are ill prepared. School principals are viewed as gatekeepers of change and a key factor in the implementation process, but unfortunately many of them find themselves unable to cope in a school environment that has become substantially different from the one in which they gained their experience.

In conclusion, the post-bureaucratic models stress the importance of lateral relationships (Bush, 1993: 12). In the new dispensation, the emphasis shifted to the empowerment of teachers and a commitment to shared decision-making, rather than on power derived from a hierarchical position. In order to achieve meaningful and constructive change, schools need to create a management culture in which the individuals feel that they are able to meaningfully participate in decision-making without fear and prejudice. In keeping with the Namibian policy on democracy, a new management strategy needs to be developed in school to allow for the development of management structures and empowering principals and other stakeholders to embrace democratic governance. An understanding of what participative management and leadership means, and how it unfolds in practice, will clearly be an essential factor in these developments.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The goals of my research are (a) to investigate principals' perceptions of participative management and (b) to gain insight into and understanding of the dimensions involved in participative management from the perspective of three school principals in the Omaha education region.

Many researchers (Cuba, 1990; Fien and Hillcoat, 1996) came to realize that science is not necessarily value-free and isolated from context. Fien and Hillcoat (1996) put it this way:

The paradigm upon which a research methodology is based is often not seen as important, because the logic and precision of the scientific method allow research to be independent of ideology. However, research methodologies are very much a puppet of underlying assumptions.

These underlying assumptions are constituted by how the researcher views reality (ontology), how the researcher gains knowledge of that reality (epistemology) and how these assumptions and perceptions are interpreted. To this end, these differing assumptions about method and modes of explaining realities are grouped into commonly agreed sets, which ultimately constitute paradigms.

What is a paradigm?

Bassey (1995: 12) defines a paradigm as:

A network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions.

According to Patton (1990: 37), a paradigm is a worldview, a general perspective, and a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. As such, paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialisation of adherents and practitioners. The paradigm tells them what is important, legitimate and reasonable. Paradigms are also normative, telling the practitioner what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological consideration. But it is this aspect of paradigms that constitutes both their strength and weakness - their strength is that they make action possible; their weakness is that the very reason for action is hidden in the unquestioned assumptions of the paradigm.

Covey (1989: 11) refers to a paradigm as a frame of reference or “mental map” through which we see the world. In this regard, researchers work from different beliefs about the nature of reality and how one sees the nature of reality, as influenced by one’s frame of reference or “mental map”.

In an attempt to have a better understanding of my own position (research paradigm in which I locate my research) in relation to other paradigms, I will give a brief overview of three major research paradigms. These are referred to by a variety of labels. In this thesis they will be referred to as ‘positivist’, ‘interpretive’, and ‘critical’ paradigms.

The positivist paradigm

The central underlying belief of the positivists is that the meaning of a statement is, or is given by, the method of its verification (Cohen and Manion 2000: 8). It follows from this statement that unverifiable statements are regarded to be meaningless. They believe that research should be empirical, that is: researchers should concern themselves with observable facts.

According to the positivist, the reality is ‘out there’ in the irrational world, and it exists whether it is observed or not and irrespective of whom observes. Bassey (1995: 12) maintained that for the positivists, discoveries about the reality of human actions could be expressed in statements - statements about people, about events, and about relationships between them. To this end the research problem consists of examining facts. Adherents of this paradigm construct their research problem by identifying inadequacies or inconsistencies in existing theories or between theories and facts (Landry, 1995 cited in Durrheim & Terre

Blanche, 1999). Researchers in this paradigm are interested in testing hypotheses and are only effective where calculations and measurement are involved. To this end, positivism puts more emphasis on objectivity, reliability and validity.

The interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm came about as a counter-movement to the positivist paradigm. Researchers in the interpretive (or hermeneutic) tradition came to realize that the social realm is different from that of the natural sciences and cannot be investigated in the same way. This paradigm is concerned with human actions, but not human behaviour, as is the case with the scientific tradition. Their argument is that action is reasoned and meaningful to the actors themselves, it is not only researchers who interpret, the people being observed also do so. Instead of the reality being 'out there', it is the observers who are 'out there'. They are part of the world which they are observing and so, by observing, may change what they are trying to observe (Bassey, 1995: 13).

Furthermore, subjectivity plays an important part in the interpretive paradigm; reality is seen as subjective and multiple, seen through the eyes of the participants within the contexts of their frame of reference. To the interpretive researcher "the only reality is that which is constructed by the individual involved in the research situation and this of course implies that multiple realities exist in a given situation" (Creswell, 1994: 4). From this it follows that reality and meaning are intersubjective and contextual.

The critical paradigm

This paradigm is also referred to as constructionist. For the critical researcher reality is multiple, constructed, holistic and is embedded in issues of equity and hegemony (Cantrell, 1993). The critical researcher believes that reality consists of a fluid and variable set of social constructions (Durrheim & Terre Blanche, 1999). There are institutional structures, such as social class divisions, that have evolved through history. These social structures (including research) are value-laden and ideological. The purpose of the inquiry is to make participants aware of social injustice and various inequities of the situation and to act as an agent of change, to emancipate the participants.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2000: 279) put it this way:

A critical paradigm is concerned in particular with the issues of power and justice and the way that the economy, matters of race, class and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions and cultural dynamics interact to construct social systems.

Why the interpretive paradigm?

According to Cohen and Manion (2000: 22), the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience, to retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated. Efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within. The imposition of external form and structure is resisted, since this reflects the viewpoint of the observer as opposed to that of the actor directly involved.

Cantrell (1993: 84) argues that this paradigm allows the researcher to understand the situation of the phenomena and to interpret meanings within a social or cultural context of the natural setting. Events are understood through mental processes of interpretations that are influenced by, and interact with, social context. According to Bassey (1995), the purpose of the interpretive research is to describe and interpret the phenomena of the world in attempts to get shared meaning with others.

My research will be conducted within this paradigm, since I am interested in understanding the subjective experience and individual perceptions of three principals with regard to participative management and the meaning they attach to it in their natural settings and also how they describe, interpret and make sense of participative management.

As an interpretive researcher, I am interested in exploring the particular meaning individuals give to events and experiences, how reality is constructed by the human mind (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This paradigm will allow me to give credibility to the subjective meaning that the principals have concerning their situation, to capture and value qualitative information and allow for deeper probing of their experiences.

Limitations of the interpretive paradigm

The Interpretive paradigm (including qualitative methodologies) is criticized for various reasons. Ruddock (1981 cited in Cohen et al. 2000: 120) argued that qualitative methodologies are criticized for being impressionistic (based on reactions or opinions rather than on specific facts or details), biased, commonplace, insignificant, ungeneralisable, idiosyncratic, subjective and short-sighted.

Another category of limitation is directed to the case study method. In this respect, Winegardner (2001:np) has the following to say:

Case study method has to do with skills limitations and /or bias on the part of the researcher. Case studies are dependent on the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. The researcher is the primary data-gathering instrument, and all researchers are not equally skilled in observation and interviewing. There is limited standardization in data analysis, and there may be confusion between data and interpretation of the data, resulting in selective presentation of evidence.

Furthermore, interviews are seen as a potent source of bias. According to Lee (1993) interviewers and interviewees alike bring their own, often unconscious, experiential and biological baggage with them into the interview situation. Hughes (1989 cited in Cohen et al. 2000: 121) argues that because interviews are interpersonal, it is inevitable that the researcher will have some influences on the interviewee and thereby on the data as such.

Literature identifies various methods for collection, analysis and report writing associated with the interpretive research paradigm. In the next section, I outline the method I used in collecting data.

Research Method: A Case study

Case studies are chosen as a method of research, because they provide an in-depth perspective of people's behaviour within their individual and social contexts (Cantrell, 1993). In essence it is a method that is able to "catch the complexity of a case or situation" (Stake, 1995:xi).

A case study is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle (Nisbet and Watt, 1984 cited in Cohen and Manion 2000: 181). According to Adelman (1980) a case study is the study of instance in action. It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling the reader to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories and principles. Case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis (Cohen and Manion, 2000: 181).

Geertz (1973 cited in Cohen et al. 2000: 182) shared the same view when he maintained that:

Case studies strive to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and thick description of participants' lived experience of thoughts about and feelings for a situation. Hence it is important for events and situations to speak for themselves rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher. In this respect a case study is akin to a television documentary.

This argument is supported by Johnson (1994), who argues that a case study is an inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. To this end, I employed multiple sources of information viz. questionnaires, interviews, and observation, which are salient features of a case study.

Nisbet and Watt (1984 cited in Cohen and Manion 2000) identified the following strengths of case studies:

- The results are more easily understood by a wide audience, as they are frequently written in everyday, non-professional language.
- They are immediately intelligible; they speak for themselves.
- They catch unique features that may otherwise be lost in larger scale data.
- They are strong on reality.
- They provide insight into other, similar situations and cases, thereby assisting interpretation of other similar cases.
- They can be undertaken by a single researcher without needing a full research team.
- They can build on and embrace unanticipated and uncontrolled variables.

From the preceding discussion it became clear that case studies, in most cases, follow the interpretive paradigm - seeing the situation through the eyes of the participants, which I have done.

The research site and the selection of the participants

My research can be regarded as a small-scale interpretive study, conducted in the far eastern town of Gobabis, which is part of the Omaheke educational region. The primary consideration for selecting this site is the fact that it is my hometown, and as a teacher by profession, also my duty station. The research was conducted at three high schools in Gobabis viz. Epako Secondary School (grade 8-10), Wennie Du Plessis High School (grade 8-12), and Gymnasium Private School (grade 8-12), involving principals of the said schools.

The sampling approach was a combination of convenience and self-selection sampling (Cohen and Manion, 2000:102). Of the six schools in the town (Gobabis), three are secondary schools. Since my interest is in management at high school level, I decided to select all three high schools, which are conveniently situated near me, thereby saving money and time. One of the salient features of these schools is the fact that all three are run by male principals. The selection of the small number of participants did not concern me, because according to Patton (cited in Cantrell, 1993), interpretive research uses small samples or even single cases, selected “purposefully” to allow the researcher to focus in depth on issues important to the study. He further maintained that sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources.

Data gathering techniques

My data gathering tools constituted the following:

Open-ended questionnaires (Appendix A)

The questionnaires were the primary data collecting technique and focused on the following areas:

- The experience of principals with regard to participative management
- Examples from practice
- Attitudes of principals to participative management, and the dimensions involved.

Semi-structured interviews (Appendix B)

Semi-structured interviews followed up on areas/issues raised in the questionnaires.

According to Kvale (1996, cited in Cohen et al. 2000:267), the use of interviews in research marks a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable, and data as somehow external to the individual, and toward regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversation. In the semi-structured interviews, I was able to personalise questions and to probe specific aspects based on the information raised in the questionnaires.

Cohen et al. (2000:276) share the same view when they observe:

Interviews enable participants - be they interviewers or interviewees - to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable.

Observation of school management team meetings

Observations concentrated on the practical aspects of participative management, i.e. how it works in practice. I devised the following schedule to focus my observation on key issues in terms of my research goals:

- In general terms I was interested in the mood or tone of management team meetings. Is the mood formal or relaxed? Is it an atmosphere that encourages participation, or one which indicates autocratic leadership? Within this broad framework I could focus on details such as:
 - The role of the chair (principal): Does he drive proceedings strongly, or does he encourage debate and contributions from other members?
 - The role of other members: Is it possible to judge the extent to which members speak with authority on certain issues? What does this say about delegation?

- How are decisions reached? Through consensus, or majority vote?

I felt these observation pointers would indicate the nature and degree of participation in school management, thereby playing a confirming as well as an enhancing role when viewed in conjunction with the other data.

Multiple sources of information are sought and used because it is unlikely that a single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective. By using a combination of different data-gathering techniques, I was able to validate and enrich my primary findings (the questionnaire data). These data-collecting techniques have been used precisely because of their potential to generate rich qualitative data. Interviews were tape-recorded for the sake of accuracy and to obviate the need to write notes. Observations afforded me the opportunities to gather “live” data from “live” situations. To this end, I arranged to attend two school board meetings to look at what was taking place in situ rather than at second hand (Patton, 1990:203-5). I was unable to arrange for observation at the third case, since there was no arranged meeting during the time I spent in Gobabis to collect data.

Ethical considerations

It is always important for the researcher to be mindful of the ethical dilemmas that confront researchers. Cavan, (as cited in Cohen and Manion 2000: 56) describes ethics as follow:

...a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.

These include the right to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, researcher responsibility and betrayal of participants. A salient feature of my research is the fact that I am personally and professionally well known to all the research participants. One of the principals happens to be my principal, with whom I have established mutual respect and a sound professional relationship. The other two principals are also well known to me, since we frequently had personal and educational contacts during the cluster-system (collaborations among different schools within a given educational region) meetings. This degree of familiarity between the

research participants and myself did not affect my research, since I made sure (from the outset) that my personal perceptions and beliefs did not interfere with my research. This was achieved by 'bracketing' all my pre-conceived beliefs, assumptions, personal bias and prejudices to allow the data to speak for themselves, thus generating hypotheses based on the principals' own interpretation and perception of participative management. The influences were further minimized by the fact that within the interpretive research paradigm one usually does not have a strong agenda, since one is not seeking to test an hypothesis, or prove a theory, but to provide a rich description of how a phenomenon is understood and experienced by the research participants.

In an attempt to minimize the effect of these similarities and to foster a sense of confidence and trust among my participants I fully explained the purpose of the research, assured them of anonymity of the school and confidentiality of data collected by way of an ethical statement, which was signed by both the researcher and the respondents. The agreement includes reference to participants' right to withdraw from the research at any point in the process of the research.

Data analysis

I first started with the transcriptions of the data from both the questionnaires and interviews. Of the two data-collecting techniques the interviews provided me with a larger amount of data, since interviews were used to supplement and probe issues raised in the questionnaires more deeply. I then started to immerse myself in the data more deeply, by listening to both tape-recorded interviews and comparing them with my transcripts several times. With my research question in mind, I developed themes, which formed the basis of my discussions.

Questionnaires were the primary data-collecting technique, while the interviews, on the other hand, were used to supplement and probe issues raised in the questionnaires more deeply. In the light of the above, data from the interviews and questionnaires are analysed and discussed simultaneously, while data from observation are included wherever they are relevant to the themes identified.

Limitations of this case study

As I have mentioned before, one of the salient features of my research is the fact that all my research participants were male. Though this was coincidental and not purposively arranged, I do regret not having been able to include female voices and experiences in the study. I return to this point in the final chapter.

Secondly, questionnaires and interviews are by nature subject to some degree of exaggeration, manipulation, fabrication, and distortion, that might to some extent have impacted on my research findings. Here the judgement of the researcher plays a key role in 'reading' the accuracy and trustworthiness of responses. Observation also plays a role here, as already mentioned.

One of the principals requested to have his interview conducted in Afrikaans (mother tongue), and to respond to questions on the questionnaire in Afrikaans. However, my proficiency at Afrikaans is such that I believe I was able to capture the nuances of this respondent's data.

Observation as a data-collecting tool was only employed at two schools. One school (based on the low enrolment figures) does not have a management team, and the principal takes important decisions only in consultation with the School Board, which only meets when the situation warrants it. During my research period, no management meeting took place. This is clearly a limitation, but one over which I had no control. I did feel, however, that the global picture emerging from the data would probably not have changed dramatically if the third case could have been included.

In the next chapter I present and discuss the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter I attempt to present and make sense of my main findings in terms of the relevant literature, as well as my research question and goals. My research is conducted within the interpretive paradigm, which aims to describe and interpret the phenomena of the world to obtain a shared meaning with others and to capture the richness of findings. With my research question in mind I developed themes, which form the basis of my discussion.

The purpose of the research is to investigate three principals' perceptions and experiences of participative management and to gain an insight into and understanding of the dimensions involved in participative management from the perspective of the three principals.

Data were acquired by employing three different data-collecting techniques viz. questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observations. As a point of departure, it is worth pointing out the relation between the questionnaires and interviews as used in my research. The questionnaires were the principal data-collecting tool. Interviews, on the other hand, were used to supplement and probe issues raised in the questionnaires more deeply. For example:

Questionnaire (Appendix A)

Q 4. What do you think are the benefits of participative management?

Participative management results in greater sense of commitment and ownership of the decisions. Consensus among different stakeholders will result in the execution of the decisions by the members of the organisation. **(R-1)**

Interview (Appendix B)

Q4. Can you think of any other benefits that your school derives from participative management apart from commitment and ownership stated in your questionnaire? Do you think it is the right way to go?

I am positive about participative management. The fact that you involve as many people as possible, who you may call them expert in their respective discipline of decision making, carry the potential that the decision taken will be supported, defended, and ultimately carried out by every one, even those that appear to be negative or defensive of decisions taken by the majority. **(R-1)**

To this end, data from both the questionnaires and interviews are discussed simultaneously, while data from observations are included wherever they are relevant to the themes identified. The principals are referred to as R1, R2 and R 3.

Involvement of stakeholders

The participants see the involvement of different stakeholders as a fundamental aspect of participative management. This is revealed in a number of responses:

All stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. These include the principal, the management, the staff members, the learners, and even the School Board, depending on the area of jurisdiction. **(R-1)**

I see schools as an organisation within systems and in order to allow the system to function effectively one has to involve other members of the organisation...**(R-3)**

According to Ang (2002:199) employees' involvement, as it is popularly known today, was born out of a fundamental belief in creating positive human relations within the organisation. The underlying assumptions and beliefs about involvement held by the respondents are in line with what McGregor (cited in Ang, 2002:199) has assumed as part of his 'theory Y' perspective of the management of human resources. These are that employees want to take responsibility for their work, they desire the opportunity for personal development within their work, and want to help achieve organisational goals.

This is in agreement with French and Bell (1995:94), who argued that most people desire increased involvement and participation, which has the ability to energize greater performance, produce better solutions to problems and greatly enhance acceptance of decisions. It was found that such group dynamics work to overcome resistance to change, increase commitment to the organisation, reduce stress levels and generally make people feel better about themselves and their world (French & Bell, 1995:94).

In similar vein, Schmuck & Runkel (1994:8) assert that individuals and groups usually have abilities, information, and skills beyond their responsibilities. Often the knowledge and skills needed to innovate and implement new programmes are already available in the organisation, ready to be utilised towards organisational change if recognised and affirmed. By making use of a participatory approach, these resources can be tapped to the benefit of the organisation. These above assertions are some of the core values of organisational development. While this study did not set out to explore the relevance of organisational development to participative management, it is interesting that several core values emerged.

These findings are also consistent with the contentions in *Towards education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training* (MBEC, 1993), which is a statement of vision and policy, translating the Namibian philosophy on education into concrete and implementable government policies. With regard to the involvement of different stakeholders and democratisation of the education system it states:

In order to teach about democracy, our teachers, and our education system as a whole must practise democracy. A democratic education system is organised around broad participation in decision-making and the clear accountability of those who are our leaders. That is not to say that every decision in a school must be subjected to a vote or that the role of a youngster will be identical to those of their parents. Rather it is to be clear that Namibians work diligently and consistently to facilitate broader participation in making the major decisions about our education and how to implement them. In democratic education for democratic society teachers must be active creators and managers of the learning environment and not its masters and caretakers (MBEC, 1993: 42)

Two of the respondents believed that participative management should not be confined to decision-making only, but should also be involved in the implementation thereof:

Participative management is when a leader involves his/her team members in decision-making and the implementation thereof. **(R-3)**

Every decision taken at the school was first discussed and then approved by the management, then discussed with the other staff members for their inputs. The decision was then implemented with the knowledge that all stakeholders were involved in taking decisions and the implementation thereof. **(R-1)**

In this regard, the principals contended that the stakeholders should not be consulted during the decision-making process only, but should also be part of the implementation of the decisions they helped to make. This is confirmed by Boyce-Prather (as cited in Gaziel, 1992) who believes that when participation of group members is limited to helping to determine how to implement a decision made by someone of higher authority, the sense of equality and subsequent commitment to the decision are not fostered.

One principal acknowledged that the days for unilateral decision-making are gone. In this regard he postulated:

...The days are gone when principals used to decide on their own. These days it is a matter of partnership as outlined in the new Education Act, which calls for the establishment of the School Board as the highest decision-making organ of the school. All major decisions must go through the School Board before decisions could be made. **(R-1)**

The principal acknowledged the importance of the School Act 2001 (which calls for the replacement or attenuating of unilateral decision-making in favour of consensual decision-making) as a means of directing his management practices for effective school management. What teachers traditionally know is information about their pupils, their subject matters and appropriate teaching methods. Teachers have had relatively little influence over the broader spectrum of school life and have experienced little involvement in decision-making. The realisation of democratic management requires teachers to be involved in a variety of tasks and responsibilities that they have previously not been part of. Collaborative decision-making will require them to become familiar with issues that previously were the concern of the principals only.

Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making takes different forms, ranging from controlled bureaucracy:

Responsibilities are divided among the management team and each management member is responsible for a particular portfolio in terms of development, initiation, planning and control. On the middle management level the subject heads are responsible for subject organisation, planning and control. At the lower level the subject teachers are responsible for the effective administration of their respective subjects and to execute other extra-mural activities. **(R-2)**.

to collegiality:

The principal together with management decides on a particular course of action. The decision taken at management level is forwarded to the rest of the staff for their inputs. Any changes to the decision taken by the management are accommodated at this level. The School Board and the SRC (student representative council) are consulted on issues affecting them. **(R-1)**

R-1's response suggests that although the principals embraced the principle of collaboration and participation, the schools depicted forms of a bureaucratic model. This attests to the fact that no single theory is sufficient to guide the practice of the principals; hence principals explore multiple approaches to a particular issue, instead of adopting a unilateral stance. Hughes et al. (cited in Bush, 1995:37) confirm:

Schools and colleges, particularly if they are large, conform to a considerable degree of Weber specification of bureaucracy, as judged by their division of labour, hierarchical structures, their rules and regulations, their impersonal procedures and their employment practice based on their technical criteria (Hughes cited in Bush, 1995:37)

R-2's response (above) is consistent with several researchers (Vroom & Yetton and Locke & Schweiger, as cited in Somech 2002:345) who proposed that a superior could call on subordinates to participate to varying degrees, ranging from exclusion to full participation. Typically the degree of involvement has been conceptualised in terms of a continuum as follows:

1. Autocratic decision-making: No advance information on a decision is given to subordinates; the superior makes the decision on his or her own.

2. Information sharing: The superior obtains the necessary information from the subordinates and then makes decision on his or her own.
3. Consultative decision-making: The superior shares the problem with the subordinates, getting his or her ideas and suggestions. Then he/she makes a decision, which may or may not reflect his/her influence.
4. Democratic decision-making: The superior shares the problem with the subordinates, and together they analyse the problem and arrive at a mutually acceptable solution (Somech 2002:234)

In my view the Leader-Member Exchange theory (Graen et al., cited in Somech 2002:348) appears relevant for explaining how the principals vary their degree of participation across followers. This theory describes how the dyadic relationship between the principal and followers develops over time as a result of role-making processes and social exchanges between the two parties (Graen et al., cited in Somech 2002:348)) When there is mutual trust and loyalty in the exchange relationship, the followers are given more responsibilities and discretion. The relationship might be presented in dyadic relationship between individuals (leader-member) as well as in groups of followers who form in-groups and out-groups in the organisation.

Observation

The notion of collegiality and collaboration were evident during my observation of the management meetings. The following features were noteworthy:

- It was evident that issues were discussed vigorously and extensively before any decision was taken.
- The spirit prevailing at the meetings was relaxed and informal.
- Decisions were based on consensus, without resorting to voting.
- The principals assumed more of a facilitating role without dictating/monopolising the discussions.

The views of the respondents regarding involvement and participation were therefore borne out by my observation. It was clear that meetings were conducted in such a way that a team

spirit was fostered by the principals among members of the management team, which suggests that the team could be working towards achieving common goals, shared vision and mission.

Common goals, shared vision

...Powerful leaders of the past and present were dreamers and visionaries. They were people who looked beyond the confines of space and time to transcend the traditional boundaries of either their positions or their organisation (Roueche *et al.* cited in Leithwood, 2000: 55)

The respondents revealed a high level of awareness of how participative management can lead to the establishment of common goals, vision and mission.

The leadership needs the help, views and opinions of all stakeholders towards the achievement of common goals, which lead to common vision and mission.
(R-3)

And:

In implementing participative management one has to consider the mission, vision and goals of the school. I see the school as an organisation within systems and in order to allow the systems to function effectively one has to involve other members of the organisations, since the vision within a system is not a one-man vision. **(R-3)**

It is clear from the above assertions that the principal believed that the crafting of the vision of the school should be arrived at through participative means. A formal statement (vision) emerged from sustained, collective staff deliberations that spanned a considerable period of time. Everything that is done at school should be relevant to the goals, vision of the school, hence many individual visions, and not only the formal leader's vision should be part of the vision-building process. As one of the respondents put it: 'the vision within a system is not a one-man vision'. To this end, the principal should not be perceived as being the sole owner of a school's vision, as this may have a negative influence on participative management. Where principals merely encourage others to support their wishes, collaboration and collegiality may be inauthentic, as teacher support may simply mean that collegiality is contrived to suit the needs of the principal (Southworth, as cited in Singh, *et al.* 2002: 60)

The link between a shared vision and participative management is further highlighted by Sergiovanni (1991:26). He defined collegiality as the responsibility given to teachers to become an integral part of the management and leadership processes of the school that are guided by that school's shared vision. It is a process of assimilation that involves encouraging personal visions to establish a vision built on synergy. It is a vision that is both personal and congenial. Senge (1990:214), commenting on the importance of shared vision put it this way: "It is my vision and our vision".

The notion of shared vision advanced by the respondents is in line with the collaborative model on vision and mission advocated by Ngcobo (1995), which is based on the assumption that teachers are innovative and can contribute towards defining the future for the school. The model allows for debate and discussions that result in a wider synthesis of views, and acceptance by teachers.

Podsakoff et al. (cited in Leithwood 2000:64) maintain that transformational approaches to developing consensus about goals include behaviours "aimed at promoting cooperation among employees and getting them to work together toward a common goal". They further assert that goal-setting activities fostered by the leader and the followers are motivational, to the extent that they increase the clarity of goals and the perception of goals as challenging, yet achievable. The promotion of cooperative goals may positively influence teachers' beliefs about the support available to them for change and their own school context, and the personally meaningful nature of the vision makes teachers focus directly on the needs of the students as the sources of their goals and vision.

In this regard Sergiovanni (1991:149) postulates that a vision is an important dimension of purposing and without it the very point of leadership is missed, but the vision of the school must also reflect the hopes and dreams, the needs and interests, the values and beliefs of everyone who has a stake in the school – teachers, parents, and students. A binding agreement needs to emerge that represents a value system for living together and that provides the basis for decisions and actions, and when shared vision is present teachers and students respond with increased motivation and commitment and their performance is beyond expectations. One of the respondents put it this way:

The leader needs the help, views and opinions of all stakeholders towards the achievement of common goals, which lead to common vision and mission. **(R-3)**

According to Murgatroyd & Morgan (1992:79) the vision of an organisation becomes a reality only once it is widely shared and begins to permeate all aspects of the organisation's activities. The vision of the school is more likely to command high levels of commitment among the school community if the various stakeholders have been involved in the formulation thereof.

Commitment, ownership and teamwork

All three respondents were of the opinion that collaborative decision-making results in a sense of ownership, transparency and commitment on the part of the teachers towards decisions taken. The following statements illustrate their views:

Responsibility and authority are shared among the team members and everybody identifies with the goals to be achieved. Everybody is willing to defend a particular decision and also own it. **(R-3)**

And:

Participative management ensures that members in the organisation take ownership of the decision, and are willing to defend decisions taken through collaborative means **(R-1)**

And:

Participative management results in a greater sense of commitment and ownership of the decisions. Consensus among different stakeholders will result in the execution of the decisions by the members of the organisation. **(R-1)**

The literature confirms these assertions. Somech (2002:437) believes that because teachers have an opportunity to be involved in, and to exert influence on, decision-making processes,

their participation promotes commitment to the decisions that are made and increases willingness to carry them out in their work with the students. This rationale is referred to as 'pragmatic' or 'human relation' (Koopman & Wierdsma, as cited in Somech 2002: 346) and assumes that participative management is an instrumental way to achieve productivity, efficiency, or other valued organisational results. According to Leonard (1993: 45), the assumptions underlying the devolution and redistribution of decision-making authority are that greater ownership, morale and commitment among stakeholders will result, and that decisions made at local level "are likely to be more responsive to the specific individual school context".

According to one respondent:

I am positive about participative management. The fact that you involve as many people as possible, whom we can call them experts in their respective discipline of decision-making, carries the potential that the decisions taken will be supported, defended, and ultimately carried out by everyone, even those that that appear to be negative or defensive of decisions taken by the majority. **(R-1)**.

The above comment indicates that the respondent believes that it is impossible to be an expert in all areas of school management, and that one needs the expertise and skills of individual members in the organisation for effective school management. This contention is in agreement with Lomec et al. (1992) who believe that participative management unleashes the knowledge and skills of people who are doing the actual work in the organisation, to tap the unique resources of each of those individuals, to create a collaborative learning experience, and to produce results that are far greater than the sum of the individuals.

The respondents see participative management as encouraging and motivating. Rather than supporting a transactional form of leadership, participative management is value-driven and change-directed (transformational). It encourages all teachers to actively participate in their school's development and transformation. It further encourages innovation, transformational leadership, and self-governance. To this end, teachers are made to feel that they are able to make a difference to the policy of the school, both as members of a team and as individual experts. Individual teachers must be able to act autonomously in the school while at the same

time being part of the school's staff that is working independently (Garmston & Wellman, as cited in Singh et al. 2002: 58) In this regard one of the respondents had this to say:

Encouraging/motivating-people tends to support and defend that which they were part in creating. People feel satisfied and fulfilled when their contributions are valued, appreciated and that they could make a difference, how small it might be. **(R-2)**

To meet the objectives and goals of the school it is important for a school to create a sense of teamwork through decentralised decision-making processes. This, according to Shipengrover & Conway (1996:36) requires 'building planning teams with trained facilitators, who could deal with visionary things'. Singh & Manser (2002:62) remind us that a collegial management approach as a style of management must satisfy certain requirements before it could be termed 'collegial'. Teachers have to work together in small groups and this will ensure that all participants are able to participate in discussions. The group must have a coordinator or specialist on a rotational basis that can lead the group in the proposal-making process and the member of the group must begin to acquire the necessary expertise by gaining experience through the process. The focus should be on improving the efficiency of the school by improving the value of education offered to the students (Campbell, as cited in Singh & Manser, 2002: 62). As one of the respondents recounted:

...a sense of teamwork is enhanced, which ultimately results in success of the organisation in the long run. Members of the organisation perceive job satisfaction, become loyal and sacrificing. **(R-2)**

Teamwork and transparency are other important aspects of organisational success. According to Ngcongco (1995:25) the advantage of teamwork is that group members give one another support and that joint energy of group members is likely to bring about success more quickly than that of individual members. The impact of joint work is what Cawood & Gibbon (as cited in NcGongo, 1995:25) refer to as 'synergy'. Principals, as leaders, are in a position to facilitate team building and thus heighten the potential of a synergistic effect. Team activities provide an infrastructure to support quality practices and concomitantly build communication and co-operation (Daugherty, 1996:85)

Two of the respondents supported these sentiments on the contribution of participative management towards teambuilding and teamwork:

Responsible people are involved in the planning, organising, solving problems and to ensure that work is done effectively. A sense of teamwork is enhanced which ultimately results in success in the long run. Members of the organisation become loyal and sacrificing. Many members in the organisation perceive job satisfaction and the goals of the organisation are achieved (**R-2**).

And:

Transparency is enhanced and members of the organisation understand why certain decisions are taken. Team members tend to know and understand the dynamics of the organisation much better. (**R-3**)

Leadership: influencing and developing followers

...We are coming to believe that leaders are those people who ‘walk ahead’, people who are genuinely committed to deep change in themselves and in their organisation. They lead through developing new skills, capabilities, and understanding. And they come from many places within the organisation (Senge cited in Leithwood, 2000: 3).

Leadership within a participative management approach (according to the respondents) assumes a central role of importance with regard to the nurturing of skills, influencing of followers and development of their abilities. It is true that people have been described as one of the most important resources, if not the key resource of organisational success, and schools are not exceptions. In whatever way organisational success may be defined, it has in many ways been attributed to the ‘people factor’. To this end, it is important for the leader to harness the full potential of each member to the benefit of the organisation. In many ways the school principal is regarded as the most influential and important individual in any school. It is his/her leadership that sets the tone of the school in terms of how leadership and management practices are to be utilised, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism and morale of the teachers and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. The goal of any leader must be to create situations and environments throughout the school that allow for individuals to develop leadership and management skills in all aspects of school life. It is also the principal who provides the vehicle, climate and motivation that can enhance a shared management and leadership style. The professional development of the teaching staff has to be fostered by the leader, as this will enhance the opportunities for

teachers to become leaders, thus increasing their sense of autonomy, as well as interdependence. An interesting aspect of the assertion above is that it presents a paradox between autonomy and interdependence. Typical questions might be: can teachers be autonomous and interdependent simultaneously? Can they supplement each other or are they antithetical? Autonomy, as a dimension of empowerment, refers to the teacher belief that they can control certain aspects of their work life with minimum interference from the management. On the other hand, interdependence reinforces the idea of collaborative efforts among teachers, sharing ideas and learning from each other. It is not my intention to provide an answer to this question, as this study did not set out to explore the link between the two concepts. However, it may present some thoughts for further exploration.

Effective leadership and transformation by the principal does not only concern skills, rules and procedures, but also focuses on the quality of the relationship with the members of the teaching staff (Murgatroyd & Gray, as cited in Singh 2002:59). Principals who demonstrate a non-bureaucratic leadership style support teachers' innovations, promote staff cooperation, initiate staff development programmes and encourage experimentation. One of the respondents captured the importance of leadership as follows:

Under participative management there must be a leader who can influence his/her top management and other members, so that they can spontaneously follow him and do their work effectively. The most important word is 'leader' and not 'boss'. The difference is illustrated by the following; the boss relies on authority, while the leader relies on sound human relations for effective management. **(R-2)**

This is in line with Bush's (1995) notion of collegial models, which emphasizes the authority of expertise rather than official authority. As one of the respondents put it: "the most important word is leader and not boss". It follows that authority within the school should reside as much with the staff as with the head. Instead of exerting authority over subordinates, the leader seeks to influence the decisions and actions of professional colleagues.

Hargreaves (as cited in Bush, 1995:69) supports the view above on spontaneity, when he claims that genuine collegiality is spontaneous, voluntary, unpredictable, informal and geared toward development.

According to one respondent:

...The solving of problems requires the involvement of many people and it is the responsibility of the leader to develop his/her subordinates to ensure that work is executed effectively. By developing your subordinates you get love and loyalty, which ultimately leads to better results. Participative management requires sound communication skills, good human relations and commitment. These requirements need to be nurtured by the leader, and once nurtured the organisation will benefit enormously in the long run. (R-2)

The above assertions are in line with Conger & Kanungo (1994), who argue that the transformational leader encourages followers to openly question his/her ideas and develop their capacities to make decisions and to influence organisational policies, which is not typical of the traditional (or transactional) leader.

Observation

The roles of the principals as leaders were evident during my observation of the management team meetings. The following key features emerged:

- It was clear that the principals were the chief catalysts and the initiators of development through collegiality. The principals introduced and led agenda items, but encouraged discussion from members.
- The principals facilitated discussion toward reaching common goals and consensus on different issues.
- It was clear that duties and responsibilities had been assigned to management team members in a professional manner, in accordance with their abilities and expertise. This could be judged by the confident way in which different members spoke on matters within their portfolios.

Management as leading and guiding is usually described as the activity or task, which influences people in such a way that they will willingly work and strive towards achieving the goals of the group (Reynders, as cited in Van der Westhuizen, 1991:41). According to this

approach, the principal gives guidance so that all the efforts of the school can be channelled appropriately. Two of the respondents put it this way:

...Management is about persuasion and there is time to persuade your followers to do the right thing and acknowledge the fact that it takes time to persuade someone. It is the responsibility of the leader to educate, guide, and persuade his/her followers by being tolerant, patient as a means of understanding your followers much better. **(R-3)**

And:

According to my view, the concept of leadership is very important in any given organisation. In my view it is of cardinal importance that the leader has the potential to lead his/her followers not through force, but through exemplary means. The followers should follow the leader voluntarily. Furthermore the leader should, through personal contact and observation, identify the potential of each individual member of the organisation to be used to the benefit of the whole organisation. **(R-2)**.

The above assertions by the respondents suggest that these leaders believed in the potential and individual development of each member in the organisation.

These contentions are in agreement with Fullan (2000:3) who defines leadership as the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers.

Participative management was regarded by respondents as developmental and empowering. One of the respondents put it this way:

Every member has his/her weak and strong points and by concentrating on one's strong points through recognition, building of trust, assigning tasks to trusted members and being positive, one can achieve a lot. **(R-3)**

Delegation

Delegation was identified by participants as conducive to participative management. Shared decision-making and teacher professionalisation are regarded as key elements of many school-restructuring plans. To this end, facilitating the development of teachers' leadership

through delegation has become an important part of the principals' role. Naturally, principals are not physically capable of attending to all the tasks within school themselves. In fact it would be impossible for him/her for example, to attend to his/her official duties and coach all the teams and teach all the grades in a school. By delegating, the principal is freed of tasks that can readily be taken over and skilfully executed by others. It enables him/her to concentrate on more important issues, which require his/her management skills (Du Toit, cited in Oosthuizen, 1998:160). Failure on the part of the principal to delegate tasks could cause serious management problems. Furthermore, delegation has the added advantage that principals can make use of the expertise of a variety of the staff at their disposal to complete the various specialized tasks which need to be carried out in a school. Delegation also serves as a vital tool in developing staff, by enhancing confidence, self-esteem, communication and organisational skills. It inculcates into staff a sense of satisfaction in being a participant in an organisation and its objectives. This sense of co-responsibility may motivate staff to identify with the school and its activities (Oosthuizen, 1998:160). One of the respondents shared the same sentiments when he postulated:

R-3. Management exists because decisions must be made and carried out and it is at this point that the involvement of different stakeholders is important. Delegated responsibilities/tasks are assigned to different members of the organisation to ensure that every member feels part of the organisation. **(R-3)**

And:

Responsibility and authority are shared among team members and everybody identifies with the goals to be achieved.

Responsibilities and duties are assigned to staff members commensurate with their abilities and potential. This is in line with the situational management theory of Hersey & Blanchard (cited in Van der Westhuizen, 1999:82), as discussed in the previous chapter. It follows that a leader should determine the styles that suit a particular situation, and that a person should be placed in a situation which best suits his/her style.

By virtue of the fact that the principal remains ultimately responsible for the completion of the tasks, he/she has to exercise a degree of discretion when deciding what task should be tackled and to whom such a task should be delegated. In this regard Oosthuizen (1998:162) asserts

that delegated tasks and responsibilities must be weighed up against the ability of the member of the staff for the effective execution thereof. This contention is in line with the view of one of the respondents when he argues:

Each management member has a specific responsibility in terms of the various activities/components offered by the school for example academic, cultural. At the lower level the subject teacher is in charge of the overall administration of their specific subjects, with the assistance from the Head of Departments. I normally assign duties and responsibilities to individual staff members based on their potential and abilities to carry out their delegated tasks effectively. **(R-2)**

Observation

The principle of delegation was evident in my observations of management meetings.

- Members of the management were afforded opportunities to give feedback on areas under their responsibilities. This attests to the fact that members of the management were trusted, their contributions valued, and they were perceived as equal partners in the running of the schools. The principals (through delegated responsibilities) were in a position to empower and develop the full potential of each member of the management.

Trust and better human relations

The respondents saw participative management as facilitating trust and better human relations:

To build sound human relations is time-consuming, but once established, it brings about results. Every member has his/her strong-and weak points, and by concentrating on one's strong points through recognition, building of trust, and being positive, one can achieve a lot. **(R-2)**

And:

Managers are people and people have personality, and the style of management or leadership one adopts is greatly influenced by one's personality. Participative management is inviting and developmental because in the process you must talk to people, ask people and in the process they would offer their service willingly. In fact participative management has a greater chance of building sound interpersonal human relations through personal contact among staff members...(R-3)

To achieve these, the principal should establish trust, respect, open lines of communications, give recognition where it is due, consider the opinions and feelings of each member in the organisation. Dinkmeyer et al. (1996:54) refers to this as 'human capital', based on the belief that people are the primary resources for any organisation. They cannot be considered as "mere cogs in a corporate wheel".

Recognition of the human factor or human relations has its origin in what came to be known as the Hawthorne Studies, spearheaded by Mayo (cited in Ang 2002:193), as reported in the previous chapter. Advocates of this approach believed that, in addition to the best technological methods to improve output, it was important to create positive human relations within the organisation. Adherents of this perspective further contended that high performance could be achieved if employees were treated fairly, with respect, and were allowed some participation in the decisions related to their work.

The respondents saw trust as being at the heart of collaborative organisation. Where trust among staff is high, individuals can spend their time and creative energy to complete their jobs for which they are responsible. In an environment with a high level of trust, relatively little time is devoted to making sure that people are doing what they have agreed upon, and not renegeing on an agreement. Trust ameliorates the need for contractual agreement and reduces the cost of negotiation and monitoring (Jones, 2000: 47).

Observation

The element of trust was highly evident during my observations. Evidence of this included:

- The manner in which the meetings were conducted, and the spirit that prevailed during the meetings. In fact, the meetings were characterised by a free flow of information in

a relaxed fashion. Members of the management appeared relaxed, at ease and comfortable in airing and sharing their views and opinions. This suggests that a spirit of collegiality was prevailing at meetings, and also that members felt free to express their views without fear of contradiction.

Selectivity of participative management

All three principals were of the opinion that participative management should be selective. One of the respondents remarked that it was sometimes impossible to include everyone in decision-making because of lack of time:

I believe that participative management should be selective. It is impossible that every time and for every small decision, no matter how small it may be, that you must consult with all the people. One just does not have the time for that. Sometimes you have to look at the problem that is there, and then you approach the people that are knowledgeable, expert and who can help you find a solution to a particular problem through discussions. If your staff members are consulted on all decisions to be taken, and it happens that you take a decision without their consent, a feeling of negativity towards the decision may develop. **(R-1)**

Bush (1995:59), in outlining the weaknesses of the collegial model, argues that a collegial approach to decision-making tends to be slow, cumbersome and when decisions require the approval of many people, the process is often tortuous and time-consuming. Participants may have to endure many lengthy meetings before issues are resolved. This requires patience and a considerable investment of time. As one of the respondents contended, “one just does not have the time for that “. In support of the view of the respondent, Law et al. (cited in Jones 2000: 125) contend that participation is inhibited by “lack of time; the incompatibility of individuals; decision-making without reference to the opinion offered; the lack of clarity and relevance”. Brocato (1990) shares the view that participative decision-making is time-consuming when he asserts that the time of teachers consumed by their participation on school committees tends to compete with their teaching responsibilities and cause confusion and anxiety on the part of the teachers

Rice & Schneider (1994:36) further warn us that administrators need to exercise care when they involve teachers in decision-making in which they have limited potential to influence the decision-making process. In agreement with Rice & Schneider (1994), one of the respondents

contended: “You will only select the few who have the potential to make valuable contributions to the decision to be made”.

The respondents revealed an awareness of the difficulties of participative management:

I think it all depends on the nature of the decision to be taken. If it were a small decision to be taken, then one would consult the rest of the staff for their inputs, but if it is an important decision affecting the school, then one has to be selective. You will only select the few who have the potential to make valuable contributions to the decision to be made. One would assign tasks/responsibility to a selected few with the necessary abilities to manage the activities successfully and to report to the principal. **(R-1)**

And:

It should be selective. If we allow everyone to say whatever he/she wants to say, then it will result in confusion because of diverse views, which might eventually jeopardise the making of a sound decision. Those showing negative tendencies toward collaborative decision-making should be eliminated from taking decisions. It is a good thing to involve staff members in decision-making, however every decision taken should be in the interest and promotion of the school. **(R-2)**

The above assertions are in agreement with Schmuck & Runkel (1994: 10) who argue that the principle of consensual decisions does not imply that all decisions should be the result of consensus. In their view, some matters in educational organisations are complex and need the input of people with expert knowledge.

Studies conducted by Rice & Schneider (1994:46) further found that principals should not involve teachers in all decisions, rather the principal should determine teachers' zone of indifference by applying a “test of relevance” (interest) and a “test of expertise” (knowledge). The combined levels of interest and expertise suggest whether or not a decision is within the teachers' zone of indifference and thus, aid the principals in determining when and to what extent teachers should be involved in the decision-making process. The basic assumption of this model is that, as principals involve teachers in making decisions located in their zone of indifference, involvement will be less effective. Also, as the principals involve teachers in making decisions located outside their zone of indifference, involvement will be more effective, thus, effective involvement of teachers in school decision-making requires that the

principal first determines which issues are located in teachers' zone of indifference and which issues are not. This will hopefully reduce the number of teachers that appear to be defensive and showing negative tendencies toward collaboration, as well as reducing their chances of being eliminated, as suggested by one respondent. The skills attached to the selection of an appropriate stage and when to introduce it, are largely dependent upon the ability of the principal to recognise the state of maturity of each individual on the teaching staff.

Taylor & Bogotch's (as cited in Somech, 2002:344) studies indicate that principals tend to involve teachers more in the technical domain than in the managerial domain; namely, decisions were differentiated by locale and position; strategic decisions were made outside the classroom by principals and technical decisions were made within the classroom by the teachers. Similarly, Conley & Rhodes (as cited in Somech, 2002:344) documented principals' unwillingness to have teachers participate in school-wide decision-making, based on the fact that principals see themselves, rather than the teachers, as being under a moral obligation to act in the interests of the school and children.

People within organisations like schools play different roles and have different responsibilities, and they are entrusted with different powers of decision-making at the various levels of organisations:

I would not say they must be consulted on all aspect of school management, because a school is an organisation, and within an organisation people play different roles. The fact that we have different roles, we have different responsibilities too, which comes back to the question of decision-making. People are entrusted with different powers of decision-making at various levels of the organisation. In my view, consultation or participation can only be sought on issues that affect members of the staff directly, for example the drafting of the school rules, learners discipline etc. In short, in any organisation there must be leaders and followers, the leaders must lead and the followers must follow. But there must be a point/time when we say there are no leaders and followers for the sake of the organisation. **(R-3)**

The contention above presents an interesting tension, which needs further exploration. The respondent argued that in every organisation there must be a leader and followers and in the same breath he asserted that at some point there should be no leader, for the sake of the organisation. The respondent seems to be caught up in what Sergiovanni (2001:166) refers to as the ability-authority gap that exist in schools. This entails that, though school principals

may be in charge as leaders, most of them are aware that often the teachers they supervise know more about what needs to be done and how to do it than they do, or alternatively it might mean that the principal is practising Lambert's (1998) notion of constructivist leadership, which maintains that everyone can become a leader and, in order to facilitate shared and reciprocal learning, principals need to explicitly release authority and staff need to learn how to enhance personal and collective power and informal authority.

Power is a basic element of any organisational life that affects the decision-making process. Every principal is empowered by virtue of his/her positional power to make decisions within a specific area of responsibility. This area of responsibility defines the activities over which the principal has legitimate power. But, through practising constructivist leadership, the notion of power becomes problematised, since leadership exists in the relationship rather than the person.

Challenges

The respondents identified several challenges that might hinder the effective implementation of participative management:

R-2. The most significant challenge is whether a staff member has the potential to carry out the tasks/responsibilities assigned to him/her successfully. The challenge here is to get results, and having reasonable, clear objectives, proper planning and control on the part of a leader can only achieve these. It depends, as I always say: "dit hang af van die jockey wat die perd ry" (depends on the jockey riding the horse). It makes no sense to put someone without the necessary skills, potential and leadership qualities in charge of an activity and expect to get results. It is the responsibility of the leader to nurture and improve these potentials among his/her followers.

The contention above is in agreement with Owens (2001: 295), who remarks that one of the persistently under-recognised problems in implementing participative decision-making methods is the need to provide participants with training in group process skills that are needed to make collaboration work well. According to him, the intention to collaborate in making a decision is simply not sufficient in itself. Moreover, it is insufficient that only the administrator be skilled in participative methods: it is essential that all participants understand and know how to play their roles effectively.

One principal regarded participative management as an infringement on the principal's authority:

I see participative management as an infringement on the principal's authority. Sometimes a popular decision (which is not necessarily correct) is taken and implemented just because of the spirit of participative management. Principals should guard against popular decisions that could prove detrimental to the school. **(R-1)**

This assertion is in agreement with Brocato (1990:45), who maintained that principals are not always eager to relinquish and devolve decision-making. The question of power is central to this argument:

Transferring of decisions from an upper to a lower hierarchical level is a cultural change. Decisions have power and when there is a change in the decision-making process, there is real and perceived loss of power. Central office personnel as well as principals will be reluctant to relinquish their roles as supervisors and final decision makers to accept new roles of services and facilitators.

In this regard Hargreaves (cited in Timperley & Robinson, 1998:609) warns us that the assumption that collegiality produces better results could increasingly be recognised as problematic, unless it is underpinned by the commitment, skills, and knowledge required for teachers to learn from one another and their environment:

...when teachers work together, the result may be the 'pooling of ignorance' rather than of expertise if staff are unaware of their limitation of their own knowledge.

Lipman (1997) recounts that it is quite possible for collegial groups to make poor quality decisions. In his case studies, he found that a cohesive school culture could result in poor decision-making, especially in cases where school cultures were cohesive to the extent that there was little overt dissent. This cohesiveness, he argues, served, if anything, to reduce the effectiveness of problem solving because it promoted norms of social support and compliances and precluded integration of potentially diverse views into the problem solution.

Some teachers lack commitment and may abuse democracy and openness in the organisation:

Lack of commitment from some team members to participate in management and decision-making. Too much room is created for those who may abuse democracy and openness in the organisation. Members in the organisation may expect to be consulted on every aspect of school decision-making. **(R-3)**

Why does a lack of commitment to participate exist, if a high level of commitment is reported to result in job satisfaction? The problem could lie with the principals. According to Rice & Schneider (1994:56) principals need to clearly define the parameters surrounding the decision-making process, making sure that teachers understand the limits of their authority and the scope of their decision-making responsibility. In similar vein, principals who engage teachers in decision-making need to communicate with teachers regarding the influence their input has had on decisions that are made. Without proper feedback, teachers may perceive that they are less influential than they actually are, and consequently their actual and desired levels of involvement will decline, as well as their overall job satisfaction, hence the lack of commitment.

Research findings (Rice & Schneider, 1994) further suggest that management issues fall inside teachers' zone of acceptance, while technical issues fall outside teachers' zone of acceptance, thus principals need to exercise a certain measure of care when they involve teachers in decisions in which they have limited potential to influence the decision-making process.

One of the respondents was of the opinion that:

...too much room is created for those who may abuse democracy and openness in the organisation. **(R-3)**

In this regard, Sergiovanni (2001:104) warns us that democracy, particularly at school level, is not the same as the national football league, where winning and losing is routine. Many things, like school standards, should not be decided by voting, and the majority should not impose its will on others. However, options and choices should be the democratic route to take.

Owens (2001: 295) shares the same sentiments. He argues that whenever we have a meeting we often unthinkingly assume that the best way to make a decision is by voting, when, in fact, voting is a highly competitive process whereby some people become winners and some losers. That may be highly appropriate in our democratic political system, but is generally not appropriate in organisational decision-making, wherein the goal is never victory nor compromise but consensus and empowerment.

Conclusion

The responses received from the respondents overwhelmingly supported the notion that participative management (or collegiality) does have a positive influence with regard to creating a sense of common goals, shared vision, a sense of ownership, commitment and better human relations. This is in congruence with the recent initiatives in Namibia, which call for the movement towards more democratic schools. Delegation as a management task was also revealed as an important aspect, which can be improved through collegiality. The respondents emphasised the role of the leaders in facilitating the implementation of participative management as well as an increasing awareness of the potential of participative management to improve human development. The responses revealed interesting paradoxes with regard to the tension between leaders and leaderless organisations, as well as between autonomy and interdependence. However, numerous responses reflected the sentiment that participative management should be selective, involving only those with the necessary skills and expertise in the decision-making process. While there is an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from participative management, critical statements about participative management pervaded responses from the respondents. These included the time-consuming nature of participative management, and the notion that collegiality impinges on the authority of the principals. The positive and negative perspectives of participative management will be summarised in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The focus of this research has been on three principals' perceptions and experiences of participative management. The chief goal was to gain insight into, and understanding of, the dimensions involved in participative management from the perspectives of the three principals. These findings were discussed in the preceding chapter.

In this chapter I start with an overview of the main findings discussed in the preceding chapter. I then proceed to make recommendations for both practice for principals in schools, as well as for further research.

Finally, I discuss the limitations of my research.

Summary of main findings

It is evident from data collected that the notion of involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process is seen as a fundamental aspect of participative management. Principals see schools as organisations within systems and in order to allow the systems to function effectively, it is important to involve other members of the organisation in the decision-making process.

Respondents acknowledge that their desire to involve others in decision-making is the result of the School Act, which calls for the establishment of the school board as the highest decision-making organ of the schools, consisting of teachers, parents and learners.

A further revelation is that participative management should not be confined to the decision-making process only, but individuals should also be part of the implementation of the decisions. This sense of involvement needs to be sustained in order for commitment from

teaching staff to be maintained, or as Covey (cited in Singh et al. 2002:62) asserts: “Without involvement there is no commitment.”

The findings further revealed that participative management has the added advantage of enabling the establishment of a common goal, vision and mission. To realize these, the principals need the help, views and opinions of all stakeholders. According to the respondents, participative management can only succeed if practised within the confines of the schools’ vision and mission. Vision, being the driving force for the success of schools, should be arrived at through collaborative means, since vision within systems is not a one-man vision, or as Senge (1990:214) puts it: “It is my vision and our vision.”

Overwhelming responses received from the respondents supported the notion that participative management (or collegiality) does have a positive influence, with regard to creating a sense of commitment, ownership and teamwork. When responsibilities and authority are shared among members of the team, a sense of commitment is achieved and everybody identifies with the goals, vision and mission of the school. People in the organisation feel satisfied and fulfilled when their contribution (no matter how small) is valued and respected. Responses revealed that participative management ensures that members in the organisations take ownership, are willing to support and defend decisions taken through collaborative means. A participative mode of decision-making results in a sense of teamwork, team spirit and job satisfaction, which ultimately result in the success of the organisation in the long run.

The role of the leader in facilitating the effective implementation of participative management received much emphasis from the respondents. The principals were seen as the chief catalysts and the initiators of development through collegiality. This was evident in the manner in which the principals facilitated discussions toward reaching common goals and consensus on different issues, as well as the way they assigned duties and responsibilities to individual management members. Two interesting paradoxes emerged:

The first is between autonomy and interdependence. Organizational life is characterized by ambiguities, tensions and biases; hence it is common that in organizations various theories are at play, depending on the management and leadership practices adopted by an individual leader, and the pressures to which managers and leaders need to respond. This phenomenon is

well-captured in Bush's (1995) "ambiguity" model of management. According to Bush (1995: 111-119) schools are good examples of ambiguity models, since it is difficult to define their goals, environment and management and leadership structures. An element of this ambiguity was revealed in my findings.

The second is between leadership and leader-less-ness, as raised by one of the respondents on page 63. In an interview with Brandt (1992), Sergiovanni argued that high levels of professionalism among teachers make leadership almost unnecessary. He explained this as follows:

Professionals don't need anybody to check on them, to push them, to lead them. They are compelled from within (Brandt 1992: 46).

This point was not pursued in my interview, but nevertheless points to an interesting paradox worth noting here.

The respondents emphasized the need for the leaders (principals) to influence, nurture, and develop the skills of each member in the organisation, to be utilised to the benefit of the organisation as such. It was also seen by the respondents as being the responsibility of the leader to educate, guide and persuade his/her followers for the good of the organisation. Rather than relying on authority, the effective leader relies on sound human relations.

Delegation as a management task was identified by the respondents as conducive to participative management. The development of teachers' leadership through delegation is seen as an important aspect of the leader's role. Delegation is seen as a means of ensuring that every member feels part of the organisation and teachers come to know the dynamics of the organisation much better. According to the respondents, duties and responsibilities were assigned/delegated to members of the organisation commensurate with their abilities and potential.

The responses received from the participants indicated that participative management facilitates the establishment of trust and better human relations. In this regard, sound leadership skills are needed to establish trust and better human relations. It was also observed that an element of trust was prevalent during the management meetings. Testimony to this was found in the form of the relaxed atmosphere and spirit under which the meetings were

conducted. Meetings were characterized by a free flow of information in a relaxed fashion, and members of the management were at ease and comfortable in airing and sharing their view and opinions

Research findings further revealed that all participants agreed that participative management should be selective. Their claims were based on lack of time and the fact that not everyone had an interest in every decision to be taken. Based on the nature of the decision to be taken, one would approach those teachers who possess the necessary knowledge and expertise on the particular aspect to be decided on. This, according to the respondents, will result in sound and quality decision-making. Another way of justifying selectivity of participative management, is the notion that people within organizations are entrusted with different roles and responsibilities; hence different people within the organizations have different decision-making power.

While there was an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from participative management, negative statements or challenges about participative management pervaded responses. These included the time-consuming nature of participative management, the notion that collegiality impinged on the authority of the principal and the misuse of democracy by certain members in the organizations.

Recommendations for practice

The results of my findings highlight the readiness of the principals to employ a participative mode of decision-making to achieve valued organisational outcomes. Also the positive effects that collegiality has on improved teachers' participation and commitments are enormous, thus collegial processes and strategies need to be sustained and effectively managed through ongoing transformational leadership and collegial management processes and strategies.

Principals need to understand that collegiality is not a 'once off' phenomenon. The process is continuous and shared vision and mission should be the driving forces behind their actions for improved teaching.

Principals need to develop cooperative, non-threatening partnerships with teachers that are characterized by trust, openness and freedom to make mistakes.

The shift to continuous collegiality requires commitment, dedication, perseverance and hard work. The improvements, developments and achievements need to be maintained, so that new grounds can be reached and new levels of efficiency and commitment displayed.

Research by Telford (1996:22) indicated that collaborative school cultures could be developed by:

- Strengthening school cultures
- Using a variety of bureaucratic mechanisms to stimulate and reinforce cultural change
- Fostering staff development
- Engaging in direct and frequent communication about cultural norms, values and beliefs
- Sharing power and responsibility with others; and
- Using symbols to express cultural values.

The principals, as leaders, should create a more collaborative culture by using increased opportunities for collaboration across curricular matters with the aim of improving teachers' participation.

Principals should be motivated and encouraged to improve their qualifications, as high levels of qualification are believed to stimulate collaboration.

Leadership and management development programmes are direly needed in Namibia, considering the impact of the apartheid education system prior to independence. The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, through collaboration with institutes of higher learning in particular and all those who have a stake in the education in general, should make it their priority to provide programmes aimed at facilitating the successful implementation of participative management. This could take the form of establishing a leadership and management institute for the professional development of teachers.

Suggestions for further research

According to Berg (1998) the value of case studies is believed to lie in their ability to provide insights that may be pursued in subsequent studies. To this end, I identified the following potential areas for further research.

- My research investigated participative management from the three principals' point of view. However, to develop a more holistic understanding of the concept, more research is needed to connect teachers, learners and parents' views with principals' understanding and perceptions of participative management in Namibia.
- Further research on participative management from the perspective of female principals is needed, since my study only included male principals. It seems likely that female leaders may perceive and practise participative management differently.
- Further large-scale research is also recommended, to study participative management from a perspective other than the decision-making domain.

Limitations of the study

My study is a small-scale qualitative case study of only three high school principals from the Omaheke Education region in Namibia. Because of the small sample, generalization of my findings across different contexts, contents and background is unlikely, thus limiting the applicability of the outcome of my findings. However, it was not my intention to generalise, but to explore meanings individual principals attached to participative management as they constructed their own meanings. Let me find solace in the writing of Yin (cited in Winegardner 2001:12), as he asserts:

Generalising from case studies is not a matter of statistical generalisation (generalising from a sample to a universe) but a matter of analytical generalisation (using single or multiple cases to illustrate, represent or generalise to a theory). Case studies involve only analytical generalisation.

Winegardner (2001:12) suggests that skilful data collection; analysis and reporting can reduce the possibility of oversimplifying or exaggerating a situation, leading a reader to distorted or erroneous conclusions. In this regard I hope that I have demonstrated rigour with regard to data collection, analysis and reporting, to counteract possible accusations levelled against case studies.

As indicated earlier, all my respondents happened to be male. This further limits the extent to which my findings can be generalised. Unfortunately, the scope of this study did not allow me to broaden my sample beyond the confines of my chosen site of research. Ultimately, convenience has to play a significant role in designing and conducting research to satisfy the requirements for a small research project.

Conclusion

The study has explored the perceptions held by principals of participative management. The responses indicated an overwhelming readiness on the part of the principals to employ participative modes of decision-making. However, their responses also illuminated arrays of difficulties and challenges associated with participative management.

These research findings must be regarded as tentative. It is, however, evident from the responses that in-depth and extensive research over a long period of time and in a different and wider range of contexts and settings in Namibia is needed to validate and test the findings of my small-scale study.

It is further clear from the responses that there are needs with regard to acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, guidance, socialization, professional and technical support that will help principals cope, adjust and succeed within a wider range of reform initiatives. From this small study it would appear that the readiness for such initiatives exists.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE-RESPONSES

- Q1. What do you understand by the concept participative management?

All stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. These include the principal, the management, the staff members, the learners and even the school board, depending on the area of jurisdiction. Final decision lies with the principal as the accounting officer. (R-1)

Under participative management there must be a leader who can influence his/her top management and other members so that they can spontaneously follow him and do their work effectively. The most important word is 'leader' and not 'boss'. The difference is illustrated by the following. The boss relies on authority, while the leader relies on good human relations for effective management. (R-2)

Participative management is when the leader involves his team members in decision-making and the implementation thereof. The leadership needs the help, views, opinions of all stakeholders towards the achievement of the common goals, which lead to common vision and mission. (R-3)

- Q2. What is your general experience with regard to participative management?

I was introduced to participative management at H.O.D. level. Every decision taken at school was first discussed and approved by the management, then discussed with the other staff members to get their inputs. The decision was then implemented with the knowledge that all stakeholders were involved in taking the decision. (R-1)

To build sound human relations is time-consuming, but once established, it brings about good results. Every member has his/her weak and strong points, and by concentrating on one's strong points through recognition, building of trust, assigning tasks to trusted members and being positive, one can achieve a lot. The solving of problems requires the involvement of many people and it is the responsibility of the leader to develop his/her subordinates to ensure

that work is executed effectively. By developing your subordinates you get love and loyalty, which ultimately lead to better results. (R-2)

Responsibility and authority is shared among the team members and everybody identifies with the goals to be achieved. Everybody is willing to defend a particular decision and also owns it. (R-3)

- Q3. What would you describe as the most significant challenges of participative management?

Participative management is seen as an infringement on the principal's authority. Sometimes a popular decision (which is not necessarily correct) is taken and implemented just because of the spirit of participative management. Principals should guard against popular decisions that could be detrimental to the school. (R-1)

Participative management requires sound communication skills, good human relations and commitment. These requirements need to be nurtured by the leader, and once nurtured, the organisation will benefit enormously in the long run. (R-2)

Lack of commitment from some team members to participate in management

Too much room is created for those who may abuse democracy or openness in the organisation. Members in the organisation may expect to be consulted on every aspects of school management. (R-3)

- Q4. What do you think are the advantages of participative management?

Participative management results in a greater sense of commitment and ownership of the decisions. Consensus among different stakeholders will result in the execution of the decisions by the members of the organisation. (R-1)

Responsible people are involved in the planning, organising, solving problems and to ensure that work is done effectively. A sense of teamwork is enhanced which ultimately result in success in the long run. Members of the organisation become loyal and sacrificing. Many

members in the organisation perceive job satisfaction and the goals of the organisation are achieved. (R-2)

Transparency is enhanced and members of the team understand why certain decisions are taken. Team members tend to know and understand the dynamics of the organisation much better. (R-3)

- Q5. How do you go about implementing participative management at your school? Please describe any explicit procedures concerning who participates, how participation occurs and so on.

Principals, together with management, decide on a particular course of action. The decision taken at management level is forwarded to the rest of the staff members for their inputs. Any changes to the decision taken by the management are accommodated at this level. The school board and the SRC (student representative council) are consulted on issues affecting them. (R-1)

Responsibilities are divided among the management team and each management member is responsible for a particular portfolio in terms of development, initiation, planning and control. On the middle management level the subject head are responsible for subject organisation, planning and control. At the lower level the subject teachers are responsible for the effective administration of their subjects and to execute other extra-curricular activities like culture, sport etc. (R-2)

First step involves the identification of tasks to be completed by the management, and then it is followed by explaining the tasks. Members responsible for the execution of tasks are identified. (R-3)

- Q6. Please describe one or two examples of how participative management works at this school.

For example budget-submission and approval. Every teacher submits a budget for subject or other area under his or her responsibility for example sport. These budgets (considering the financial position of the school) are then discussed at the management level for recommendations or approvals. These recommendations are then discussed with the individual teacher to reach a consensus. Then the whole budget is discussed by the entire teachers for recommendations and approval by the school board. (R-1)

Refer to point 5 (R-2)

For example admission of learners: New enrolment. Careful selection of members to serve on the enrolment committee The tasks/ roles and responsibilities of members explained by the principal/tasks delegated among the committee members for example two teachers are responsible for the enrolment of all the grades8 and so on. The members worked out the modalities and report to the greater group. (R-3)

- Q7. What is your general attitude towards participative management in general?

Positive-consensus is very important in decision-making . Involvement of many stakeholders in decision-making process ensures the successful implementation of it. (R-1)

Encouraging/motivating-people tends to support and defend that of which they were part in creating. People feel satisfied and fulfilled when their contributions are valued, appreciated and could make a difference. Participative management build teamwork, enhance morale and make everyone feels important. (R-2)

Inviting - Participative management will result in capacity building. (R-3)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW RESPONSES

RESPONDENT R-1

- Q1. Do you think that participative management should be selective or should every member be consulted on every aspect of school management?

Yes, sir ... I believe that participative management should be selective. It is impossible that every time and for every small decision, how small it may be that you must consult with all the people. One just does not have the time for that. Sometimes you have to look at the problem that is there, than you approach the people who are knowledgeable, expert and who can help you finding a solution to that particular problem through discussions. If your staff members are consulted on all decisions to be taken, and it happen that you take a decision without their consent, a feeling of negativity towards the decision may develop.

- Q2. You have stated that you have been working under previous principals at other schools. Could you give me some examples of how these principals implemented participative management?

Hhhh ... mostly as management member you were responsible for a certain aspect of management for example teachers training, learners etc. The management team discussed decisions and recommendations by the management members before decisions could be implemented. This ensures that decisions were not implemented unilaterally, but carries the consent of every management member.

- Q3. You stated that one of the challenges is the fact that sole decision-making no more rests on the principal, and that these could pose a problem. What do you mean by that?

Eeeeh ...the days are gone when principals used to decide on their own. These days it is a matter of partnership as outlined in the new Education Act, which call for the establishment of

the school board as the highest decision-making organ of the school. All major decisions that affect the school must go through the school board before decisions could be made.

- Q4. Can you think of any benefits that your school derived from participative management? Do you think it is the right way to go?

I am positive about participative management. The fact that you involved as many people as possible, who are as you may call it experts in their respective discipline of decision making, carry the potential that the decisions taken will be supported, defended, and ultimately carried out by everyone, even those that appear to be negative or defensive of decisions taken by the majority.

RESPONDENT R-2

- Q1. Under the definition of participative management you put more emphasis on the quality of a good leader. Could you please further define the concept as such? What is participative management?

Hhhh—According to my view the concept of leadership is very important in any given organisation. In my view, it is of cardinal importance that the leader has the potential to lead his/her followers not through force, but through exemplary means. The followers should follow the leader voluntarily. Furthermore the leader should through personal contact, observation identify the potential of each individual member of the organisation to be used to the benefit of the whole organization.

- Q2. Having been a headmaster at various schools in Namibia, give me some examples on how you implemented participative management at your schools.

Haaa ...GOOD. If we look at the structure of the school, the principal is at the upper level of the hierarchy, followed by the management at the middle level of the hierarchy. These two levels form together the top management. The principal consults the management on all major decisions to be taken as a means of encouraging partnership and teamwork. Each management

member has a specific responsibility in terms of the various activities/components offered by the school for example academic, cultural. At the lower level the subject teacher is in charge of the overall administration of their specific subject, with the assistance from the Head of Departments. I normally assign duties and responsibilities to individual staff members based on their potentials and abilities to carry out the tasks effectively.

- Q3. What would you describe as the most significant challenges (Disadvantages) of participative management?

The most significant challenge is whether a staff member has the potential to carry out the tasks/responsibilities assigned to him successfully. The challenge here is to get result, and having reasonable, clear objectives, proper planning and control on the part of a leader can only achieve it. It depends as I always say “dit hang af van die jockey wat die perd ry”(depends on the jockey riding the horse). It makes no sense to put someone without the necessary skills and potentials and leadership qualities in charge of an activity and expect to get result. It is the responsibility of the leader to nurture and improve these potentials among his/her members

- Q4. Do you think that participative management should be selective or should everybody be consulted on all aspect of school management?

Aaaa ... I think it all depends on the nature of the decision to be taken. If, it is a small decision to be taken, then one would consult the rest of the staff for their inputs, but if it is an important decision affecting the school, then one has to be selective. You will only select the few who have the potentials to make valuable contributions to the decision to be made. One would assign tasks/responsibility to selected few with the necessary ability to manage that activity successfully and to report to the principal

- Q5. Do you think participative management is the best way to go?

Aaaa, Ja, but as I have said earlier, it should be selective. If we allow everyone to say whatever he/she wants to say, than it will result in confusion because of diverse views, which might eventually jeopardize the making of a sound decision. Those showing negative tendencies towards participative decision-making should be eliminated from taking decisions.

It is a good thing to involve staff members in decision making, however every decision taken should be in the interest and the promotion of the school as such.

RESPONDENT R-3

- Q1. How did you go about implementing participative management at your previous school? Give some examples on how you did these?

Okay---This is a concept that came to me as part of an experience and the desire to be part of things and the role to play in an organisation. In implementing participative management one has to consider the mission, the vision, and the goals of the school. I see the school as an organisation within systems and in order to allow the system to function effectively one have to involve other members of the organisation, since the vision within a system is not a one man vision. Then comes the issue of decision-making. Management exists because decisions must be made and carried out and it is at this point that the involvements of the different stakeholders are important. Delegated responsibilities/tasks are assigned to different members of the organisation to ensure that every member feels part of the organization.

- Q2. Do you think that participative management should be selective or should everyone be consulted on all aspect of school management?

I would not say they must be consulted on all aspects of school management, because a school is an organisation, and within an organisation people play different roles. The fact that we have different roles we have different responsibilities, which come back to the question of decision-making. People are entrusted with the power of decision-making at the various levels of the organisation. In my view consultation or participation can only be sought on issues that affect member of the staff directly for example the drafting of the school rules, learners discipline etc. In short in any given organisation there must be leaders and followers, the leaders must lead and the followers must follow. But there must be a point/time when we say there are no leader and no follower for the sake of the organization.

- Q3. You stated as one of the challenges the lack of commitment from some teachers to engage in participative management. How do you go about to overcome these challenges?

That is not easy, there is no easy answer to that question, but it all boils down to commitment and the willingness of each member to participate. However management is about persuasion and there is time to persuade your followers to do the right thing and acknowledge the fact that it takes time to persuade someone. Sometimes the lack of commitment has got nothing to do with someone not wanting or willing to do things, but can be attributed to the fact that somebody does not understand what it is all about. It is the responsibility of the leader to educate, guide, and persuade his/her followers by being tolerant, patient as a means of understanding your followers much better.

- Q5. How does your school benefit from participative management? Do you think it is the right way to go as opposed to other forms of management?

Managers are people and people have personality, and the style of management or leadership one adopts is greatly influenced by one's personality. Participative management is inviting because in the process you must talk to people, ask people and in the process they would offer their service willingly. In fact participative management has a greater chance of building sound interpersonal human relations through personal contact among staff members. It ensures that members in the organisation take ownership of the decision, and are willing to defend decisions taken through participative means.