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**Namibian school principals' perceptions of their management
development needs**

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Faniel Kapapero

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Abstract

The Namibian education system is at the crossroads as a result of the demands of the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), a programme initiated by the Government to address shortcomings in the education and training sector. ETSIP requires that school principals play a much more significant role to realize the goal of quality education, which is one of the major goals of education reform. In view of the ever-increasing responsibilities of the principals for ensuring the quality of education, the need for management development has become more apparent. Although management development for principals in the African context is a recent phenomenon, it has been a subject of extensive research over the years in many developed countries. The findings of these studies suggest that it has the potential to improve the quality of school leadership and ultimately lead to school improvement.

In Namibia, literature suggests that little has been done to determine the needs of school principals with regards to their management development. This study therefore seeks to address that need. The study is situated in the interpretive research paradigm whose central purpose is to interpret and understand the phenomenon through the perceptions and experience of the participants. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

The findings generally suggest that principals perceive management development as vehicle to empowerment and capacity building. The findings further suggest that principals would prefer management programmes that are more experienced-based and offer opportunities for reflection. The findings also brought to light the aspect of monitoring and support as a critical element in the success of management development programmes. As far as the management development needs of school principals are concerned, the findings highlighted the following needs: the need to be trained on how to manage change which include the new curriculum and policies, training in information

communication and technology and training in the management of human and financial resources which include instructional leadership and budgeting.

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the context of the study, the rationale and motivation for undertaking the study. I further discuss the goals of the research and the research paradigm and present a definition of terms and the structure of the study.

1.2 Context

Changes in the political landscape and the advent of democracy in Southern Africa have put the role of education and that of the principal under the spotlight. The school has become a battleground of ideas on how the education system should be transformed to address the socio-economic problems prevalent in our societies today. It is widely recognized that education is a key element in producing change and in Namibia a large portion of the national budget goes to education, making the sector a top priority of the government (Namibia. Report of the Presidential Commission, 1999).

In Namibia the major goals for education - access, quality, democracy and equity – are both calls to redress past imbalances as well as benchmarks for future education development (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education and Culture [MBEC], 1993). These benchmarks put pressure on the principal to play a more significant role than was the case in the past. More and more responsibilities have been added to the job description of a principal, making the position one of the most demanding and arguably least rewarding in the Public Service. The role of the principal has become highly specialized and teaching experience alone no longer serves as a criterion for recruiting principals. Increasingly it is

“managerial competence” (Bush, 2003, p. ix) that is required, especially as schools become more self-managed. Organisations generally are becoming increasingly complex and hence require higher levels of skills as well new competencies from leaders (Yukl, 2002, p. 370). It was against this background that a Presidential Commission on Education instituted in Namibia in 1999 recommended that the quality of management of schools should be drastically improved.

In developed countries this need is increasingly being recognised and catered for. In the United Kingdom, for example, aspiring principals need to acquire the National Professional Qualification for Headship (Bush, 2003, p. ix). Less developed countries, such as South Africa, have also acknowledged the need for specialized training. The establishment of the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance and other initiatives such as the Zenex Foundation Advanced Certificate in Education [ACE] School Leadership Research Project and the new ACE School Leadership developed by the Department of Education clearly demonstrate the commitment of the Department of Education to developing management skills among school leaders. The Ministry of Education in Namibia has, however, been less proactive. Despite the huge responsibility entrusted to the principal, there is very little support from the Namibian Ministry of Education [MoE] to build the kind of specialized capacity in principals to respond to the challenges posed by the position. In 2000 the Namibian MoE, with the support of the Academy of Education Development [AED] introduced an induction programme for school managers to build capacity among principals and heads of departments. These were self-study programmes organized at cluster centre level under the supervision of the inspector of education. This initiative was short-lived, however, and was abandoned after a few years for unspecified reasons.

The Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme [ETSIP] is a recent initiative by the Namibian Ministry of Education to address the shortcomings in the education system. This programme has resurrected the idea of the necessity of the development of management skills to prepare newly appointed principals for their role. The document (Namibia. ETSIP, 2006, p. 25) acknowledges that school academic

performance has a high correlation with the abilities of the school manager and argues that opportunities for staff development are insufficient. There is clearly an urgent need for Namibia to implement some form of specialized training for school principals. The subject of my research concerns what exactly these development programmes should focus on.

Providing support for new principals has been the subject of extensive research over the years in many countries (Gronn, 1999; Murphy, 1992; McFarlane, 2000; Calitz, Fugelstad & Lillejord, 2002 & Madasi, 2004). Findings generally point to the need to strengthen the capacity of principals and argue that many schools suffer from the consequences of bad leadership and inadequate preparation of school leaders. A recent study (Udjombala, 2006) in Namibia investigated a leadership development programme held in the Ondangwa region and found that the “programme helped the participating principals to experience personal changes and professional growth”. However, this was a pilot programme initiated at the regional level supported by a non-governmental organisation. My research aims to add to this limited pool of evidence.

1.3 The conception of the study

The seed that germinated into this study was planted way back in 1995 when as I was requested by the then Regional Management of Education in the Kavango region to take up a leadership position at Kandjimi Murangi secondary school. Barely a month after I graduated from the University of Namibia with only two weeks experience in school leadership when I worked as Head of Department at my previous school. When the offer came, I took it as a challenge, thinking that there would be support coming from the Regional Office in the form of in-service training to help me cope with the demands of principalship.

A month, six months, a year passed by without any form of assistance, except for principals’ meetings and some workshops on how to place orders for textbooks and

stationery. Every time my supervisor visited my school, he would ask: “Is everything okay?” My response would be something like: Yes, but... and he would say: “You are fine, please keep it up!” What followed was a visit from a group of inspectors and subject advisors to my school to do a panel inspection. I thought my supervisors were well aware of the fact that I was new and had no experience in managing a school and above all had been given no assistance to build capacity. Given the situation I imagined they would be lenient in their approach. This was not to be, the report that came out at the end of that exercise was very critical of the way I managed the school and outlined a number of management areas that needed improvement. After two years of managing a school on a “hit and miss” basis (Van der Westhuizen, 1991) waiting for support from somewhere for management development, I enrolled with an institution of higher learning to pursue a Diploma in Education Management. This qualification was important as it helped me understand the issues related to educational leadership and management.

During the five years that I served as a school principal I learned that principals are “important people and that they are indeed worth it when thinking about opportunities for professional development” (Daresh & Playko, 1992, p. xii). I also learnt that the position of the principal is one of the most challenging in the public service. Kantema (2001) argued that the principal determines the effectiveness of the school. If principals were the key players in the success of any education system, surely they deserved better support in the form of management development. It is almost eight years ago since I left the position of principal, but the idea of creating some support for principals has remained with me since the day when I walked into the school to take over its leadership. When the opportunity came to choose a research topic, it was just a matter of formality as the seed was already sown.

1.4 Research goal

In light of the dearth of development opportunities for school principals in Namibia this study attempts to explore school principals' perceptions of their management development needs with a view to:

- Feeding into existing initiatives (such as ETSIP) in order to highlight the need for management development programmes;
- Identifying and clarifying management and leadership development needs of serving principals, and
- Thereby informing the future development of school leadership programmes.

To achieve this goal the study endeavoured to answer the following research questions:

- How do principals experience their role?
- What do they consider to be the major responsibilities of a principal?
- Do they think they need management development to fulfill these responsibilities?
- If so, what kind of management development do they need? What do they see as priority areas?

1.5 Methodology

This research is situated in the interpretive research paradigm. The goal of this research is to understand the perceptions and experiences of principals with regard to their

management development needs. The emphasis is on understanding and making meaning through interpretation, thus the nature of the topic suits the interpretive approach.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 22) the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. Principals and Inspectors of Education who participated in the study may perceive and experience events differently even if they are from the same region. Neumann (2000, p. 71) argued that an interpretive researcher wants to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied or how individual experience daily life. From this point of view, it is obvious that the participants bring to the study all kinds of realities and a wealth of knowledge in relation to the research question. In this context, my role as a researcher was to guide the process through proper data collection methods. Throughout the process I remained a critical learner and that stance enabled me to see things through the eyes of those being studied. The interaction with the participants made the whole process of study lively and interesting.

I used interviews and document analysis to gather data from the participants. Patton (2002, p. 48) argued that “studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks”. The use of more than one technique of data collection gave me the opportunity to triangulate the data and in the process gain broader understanding of the issues I studied.

1.6 Definition of terms used

- **Management development:** Taylor and Lippitt (1975, p. 4) defined management development as “the attempt to improve managerial effectiveness through a planned and deliberate learning process”. In this study, management development refers to a host of in-service training programmes for school managers.

Management training, professional development and leadership development are other terms used to denote management development.

- **School clustering system:** Dittmar, Mendelson and Ward (2002, p .4) described the school clustering system in the Namibian context as a system that requires the grouping of schools into clusters, each normally consisting of between five and seven schools. In each cluster one school that is central and easily accessible, preferably with adequate resources and is situated at a development centre with suitable social and commercial services is selected as a cluster centre.
- **School leaders:** In this study, school leader is a term used to refer to the principal, deputy principal and heads of department at school level (school management). School leaders are also referred to as school managers.

1.7 The structure of the study

This study is divided into six chapters and is structured as follows: The current chapter is the first of the six chapters.

Chapter two presents a review of selected literature on management development. I briefly discuss what management development entails in the context of educational management and leadership. I also provide the rationale and possible benefits for management development. Concepts and learning approaches associated with management as well as management and leadership skills for school principals are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter three is a discussion of the methodology used in the study. This chapter explains what a research paradigm is. It also presents an overview of the two paradigms namely, the positivistic and the interpretive paradigms and includes the rationale why I prefer to work within the interpretive paradigm. The data collection methods and techniques, data analysis and the ethical and validity issues are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter four is devoted to the presentation of data. In this chapter the responses of the participants in the study are presented with no comments from my part. My role in this chapter is to arrange the data into categories so that it speaks for itself.

Chapter five discusses the findings in themes emerging from the data. The discussion takes into consideration the literature presented in chapter 2.

Chapter six consists of the conclusion. It presents a summary by drawing conclusions from the findings, making recommendations for practice and making suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

If education, in general, and schools in particular are seen as tools for social change, educational leaders are assumed to be among the most critical artisans. This assumption is held by the public-at-large as well as by education professionals. Developing school leaders therefore, is one of the most promising avenues available for successfully addressing the changes which will challenge future schools (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1994, p. 7).

In the previous chapter attempts were made to clarify the goal of this study, which is to investigate the principals' perceptions and experience of their management development needs. This chapter focuses on the review of literature of some key theoretical frameworks and on the concepts underpinning management development and is divided into four sections. The first section of this chapter focuses on how management development is understood in the context of educational leadership and management. The goals and benefits of management development as well as the importance of support, monitoring and coordination of the management programmes form part of this section.

Management development implies learning, therefore it is necessary to discuss various approaches to how people learn. In the second section I present an overview of some of the approaches, i.e. experiential learning, reflective practice, self-awareness and learning organisations. Management development usually targets specific management and leadership skills school managers ought to possess and in the third section I give an account of these as presented in the literature. The fourth and final section presents a brief

overview of how management development is seen internationally, and concludes with a discussion of the Namibian situation.

2.2 What is management development?

Different commentators and researchers define management development differently. The reason for this lies perhaps partly in the fact that management development particularly in the context of educational management has its roots in other fields such as business management, economics, sociology, psychology. As a result concepts like professional development, leadership training, preparation programmes for managers, and management training are used interchangeably (Leithwood et al., 1994, Daresh & Playko, 1992, Calitz et al., 2002, Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005).

Taylor and Lippitt (1975, pp 4-5) define management development as:

the attempt to improve management effectiveness through a planned and deliberate learning process. It is a part of organizational learning, a process through which the organization develops capability to understand its own behaviour and more specifically, the interdependence of its decision- making process in the multiple environments. As such, management is a social influence process of change, dealing with change of attitude and understanding to affect managerial behaviour, job performance, and operational results.

This definition emphasizes management effectiveness, organisational learning, capability, change in attitude, job performance and operational results. These are key elements in the effective functioning of any organisation. Clearly Taylor and Lippitt look at management development from a business organisation point of view. But as the discussion in this study indicates schools are organisations and educational management draws from several other disciplines (Bush, 2003). Ashton (1975, p. 5) views management development as a conscious and systematic decision-action to control the development of managerial resources in the organisation, for the achievement of

organisational goals and strategies. This supports the viewpoint of Taylor and Lippitt (1975). Other important features of this definition concern the goals and strategies of the organisation. Put differently, management development is one of the tools used to bring about change and renewal in an organisation. Prokopenko (1998) suggests that management development has a “simple sound” to it. Clearly it means developing the ability of the people to manage their organisational environment (p. 35).

Leithwood et al. (1994) use the term ‘socialization’ to refer to professional or management development for school administrators.

The term socialization encompasses those processes by which an individual selectively acquires the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to perform effectively the role of a school leader. Such processes may range from carefully planned, formal education programs, for example, through less formal but still planned experiences (e.g. working with a mentor), to informal, usually unplanned on-the-job leadership experiences (Leithwood et al., 1994, p. 148).

The notion of ‘careful planning’ is evident in these definitions. In my view management development is not a haphazard activity but rather one that requires careful planning. There is a demand for needs assessment and performance appraisals to provide a holistic picture of the organisation in terms of strengths and weaknesses. It is about the development of human resources to render an effective service to the organisation. Taylor and Lippitt (1975, p. 5) argue that management development is a management activity and therefore the responsibility of the “highest unifying level of management and could fulfill the responsibility by creating the climate, structure and procedure which foster the development of people.” This responsibility, in my view emphasizes the aspects of supervision, monitoring, coordination and evaluation of management development programmes. It also highlights its relevance to the needs of the school and the society as a whole. Prokopenko (1998, p. 10) maintains:

For management development to be of practical use, it must be in tune with what managers are expected to achieve, what they actually do, the numerous different roles they play and how well they perform.

Van der Westhuizen (1991, p. 5) provides a useful explanation of what management development for school managers should entail. According to him management training of the educational leaders should comprise two aspects, namely: basic management training followed by management development programmes. The basic management training is usually pre-service training, whereas management development is in-service training. This view of looking at management development is closely related to Daresh and Playko's three phases of professional development, namely: pre-service preparation, induction and in-service training (Daresh & Playko 1992, pp. 4-5). Management development for school managers thus falls under the in-service phase of the training continuum and consists of learning opportunities that are provided to individuals while they are actually engaged in a job.

Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005, p. 301) offer a more extended explanation of management development and maintain that:

Management development is a special form of professional development. It is related to the specialized body of knowledge and skills that emerges from the discipline of generic management and the associated field of educational administration, management and leadership. This in turn draws on concepts from education, philosophy, sociology, psychology and business management. Management development is a broad concept that embraces a number of elements and is impacted on by a number of agencies in the school system. It incorporates management training, management education and management support

Ashton (1975) attempts to clarify what he called a "misunderstanding" about the function of management development in terms of process and context. In his view, the process is primarily concerned with helping the individual to change in ways which will enable him to perform better currently and in the future, in terms of the work he is doing. In terms of

the context of management development, it is necessary to understand the organisation's needs as distinct from its activities. Needs in his opinion, can be defined in terms of types, numbers and levels of skills and ability which the organisation will require from its management resources in order to achieve the agreed objective of the organisation. Ashton (1975, p. 5) further suggests that:

It is useful to view this function as serving a balance of interest- coping with the demands of the "top down" and "bottom up" views. The "top down" view maybe characterized as a prime concern with satisfying the needs of the organization for an adequate supply of managerial resources and experiences to achieve its objectives. The "bottom up" view emanates directly from the needs of the individual manager in terms of his development.

The explanation offered above is important in terms of needs identification in any educational institution. It implies that the needs of the school manager may not necessarily be the same as that of the school or may not be in line with the school's objectives. It is therefore important to understand the needs of the organization before any progress can be made.

2.3 Motivation for management development

Organizations and the leadership of organizations, it is frequently claimed, are moving into a new era of post-modernity and globalization in which most previous formulae for leadership effectiveness and successful organizational performance are likely to be found wanting. In particular, reliance on informal natural selection or happenstance mechanism of fostering leadership talents represents a prescription for possible organization extinction. To be effective organizations must identify those who have the potential to acquire the abilities to implement visions, to align key relationships, to develop trust, to live with uncertainty, to be self-aware and continually learn and then nurture them as tenaciously and carefully as they would nurture any other precious resources critical to success. (Gronn, 1997, p. 274)

Gronn's view supports the need for management development. It suggests that modern organisations and leadership are faced with huge challenges that require special skills and abilities to compete and succeed in the ever-changing and turbulent organisational environment. It highlights the importance of capacity building in an organisation to meet those challenges. It is often said that people are a critical resource of any organisation. Gronn (1997) advises that organisations, in order to ensure their survival, should invest in their human resources.. Bezzina (2001, p. 141) observes that headteachers are becoming more task centered, due to the fact that schools are being given more responsibility and are being held accountable for what happens at the school site. In his opinion these developments highlight the necessity for management development for educational and school leaders in particular, in order for them to be adequately prepared for their evolving role.

Continuous reform and transformation in education systems around the world necessitates the need for management development to equip school leadership with the skills to manage these changes. Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005) confirm that the purpose of management development is to assist the personal and professional growth of managers so that they develop competencies and cognitive capabilities to perform their role effectively. Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005) outlined the major demands placed on school managers as follows:

- The management of people for whom they are responsible
- The management of systems (which invariably also involve people and other resources in the school) and
- The management of self (because so much of the work is about interaction with others that reflects one's own behaviour) (p. 301).

Glasman (1995) uses the concept "empowerment" extensively to refer to the delegation of responsibilities and devolution of power from the district office to school principals and in turn the principals empower their staff through staff development activities.

Management development provides the opportunity to empower school principals, thereby making them more effective.

In a study on management needs for school leaders, Boyle and Brown (2002, pp. 38-39) found the following:

- The development of budgeting/ financial management skills
- The skills of monitoring and evaluation, identifying performance
- Managing developments and change
- A range of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, including communication skills, negotiation skills and time management
- Training in Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills
- General management and leadership skills

Boyle and Brown (2002) concluded that the insights gained from this study provided a profile of the leaders needed in today's schools. These findings would have major implications for the preparation and professional development of school leaders who must embrace their leadership role as a professional commitment and be capable of fulfilling it effectively.

The identification of needs is important as it gives a picture of the situation in terms of the real needs and areas that require intervention. This aspect of management development ties in with the issue raised in the previous discussion regarding planning.

Calitz et al. (2002, p. 21) offers a "dynamic framework for management development" and argues that the central thrust of the framework is capacity-building; developing the ability of institutions and individuals to perform effectively and consistently. This consists of five key components. They are:

- **Strategic direction-** building the capacity to set the course for schools, institutions and various levels of the education service, within the context of agreed values and principles which will guide them. And keeping them on course.
- **Organisational structures and systems-** building the capacity to deliver quality education services through effective structures and procedures
- **Human resources-** developing people at all levels of the education service, whether they are managerial, technical, professional or support staff.
- **Infrastructural and other resources** – developing the basic infrastructure for decision making, and providing adequate technical, financial and material back-up.
- **Networking partnership and communication-** linking institutions, people, resources inside and outside South Africa, in a variety of practical, focused ways, and improving levels of communication.

The “dynamic framework” outlined above suggests that education is a complex undertaking and requires development in all areas to ensure its effectiveness. It also suggests that developing the capacities of school leaders alone is not enough unless one takes a comprehensive approach that includes the areas contained in the framework

2.4 Potential benefits of management development

The discussion on the rationale for management development suggests that management development offers a number of benefits in different ways to different stakeholders in education besides the school leaders and the school. Both Calitz et al. (2002) and Glasman (1995) view management development as a vehicle for empowerment and capacity building for school managers and the staff as whole. In their view, management development, if properly coordinated could lead to school improvement and promote a culture of lifelong learning among the staff and in the larger community.

The literature from studies conducted in countries where efforts have been made by the educational authorities to implement management development reveals that there have been significant improvements in the management of schools and education in general. Benefits that stem from the implementation of management development were observed in the following areas: increased support to staff, improved communication, interpersonal relationship, budgeting, school marketing, designing school development plans and in teaching and learning (Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Restine, 1997; Boyle & Brown, 2002; Bezzina, 2001; Bush & Oduro, 2006).

Huber (as cited in Udjombala, 2006, p. 23) refers to the benefits of management development saying:

- It qualifies school leaders to understand the complexity of the system along with the different individuals and groups involved as well as the interactive and collaborative relationships between them.
- It enables school leaders to develop influencing relationships and to lead proactively.
- It familiarizes school leaders with the potential stumbling blocks that may exist and how these obstacles can be become challenges that will be overcome.
- It qualifies leaders to intervene appropriately whenever challenges and obstacles occur in the school.
- It helps leaders to shape their schools in a way that the teachers who are there can be more reflective in supporting their learners to achieve better learning outcomes, and
- Through training and development, school leaders become facilitators of change who effectively support teachers in their work with pupils.

From the above position, management development offers a lot in the professional and personal development of a school leader. The significance of this argument is perhaps embedded in the improvement of the learning and teaching, which are the core business

of a school. School leaders spend a sizeable amount of time building relationships with teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders.

Daresh and Playko (1992) report on the Danforth Principals' Preparation Program in the United States of America. Investigation of the outcome of the program have revealed certain benefits. The benefits are:

- Danforth candidates have had a much clearer chance to witness the realities of practice in educational administration.
- They have indicated that their leadership preparation experiences have focused on their ability to become more personally reflective, and
- That they were better acquainted with many of the technical skills required of a school administrators. (p. 176)

The benefits of management development for school principals and the organisation are also highlighted by a number of researchers including Yukl (2002), Mullins (2002) and Mello (2002). These researchers are in agreement that management development can increase confidence, motivation and commitment of the staff as well as provide opportunities for career mobility. Organisational growth and renewal can be realized through management development.

2.5 Creating a supportive climate for management development programmes

In my opinion, the success of management development programmes largely depends on the structure and support mechanisms in place which encourage participation and growth. It is therefore advisable that the supervisor creates a conducive atmosphere; by providing resources and allocating ample time for management development activities. The active involvement of the supervisor in the program boosts the morale of the participants and adds value to the program. Yukl (2002) states that many things can be

done to create and maintain a supportive environment. He offered the following examples:

- Make job assignments that allow people to pursue their interests and learn new skills
- Establish work schedules that allow enough free time to experiment with the new methods.
- Provide financial support for continuing education by participants
- Arrange special speakers and skills workshops for participants
- Establish a sabbatical program
- Establish a career counselling program to help the participants develop self-awareness
- Establish voluntary skills assessment and feedback programs
- Make pay increases partly dependent on skill development
- Provide awards for innovation and improvements. (p. 394)

These examples aim to motivate the participants to take the program seriously. On the other hand the participants have the responsibility to ensure that they commit themselves to the program in terms of attendance and participation.

Dadey & Harper (1991, p. 43) advise that management training is “more effective when it is part of long term effort, sustained over time in a variety of contexts. Upgrading should not stop when the training course ends, but should be ongoing throughout the career of a school head, which may after all last for twenty years or more.”

Ashton (1975, p. 24) is of the opinion that management has the responsibility for supplying the support necessary for a trainee to change his job behaviour as a result of some development activities. Ashton further argued that “what matters really is not whether someone learns something, but whether he can put what he has learnt into practice” (1975, p. 24).

Other aspects that go hand in hand with creating a supportive climate are monitoring and evaluation. Calitz et al. (2002, p. 23) confirms that:

Innovations and reform programmes must be accompanied by systematic evaluations of the impact on classroom practice, the school as a whole, and the learning outcomes of students. Norms and mechanisms of continuous critical reflection and inquiry should be fostered, including study groups, action research, journals and case study quality reviews.

Monitoring and evaluation of the management programmes in this context are important as supervisors keep track of the progress made by the participants. It also provides the supervisor with the opportunity to detect any deviation and take corrective actions.

2.6 Concepts and learning approaches associated with management development

Hergenhahn and Olson (2005, p. 4) define learning as “a relatively permanent change in behavioural potentiality that occurs as a result of reinforced practice”. The emphasis here is on change in behaviour, in other words the results of learning must always be translated into observable behaviour. Learners should be able to demonstrate an ability to do something that they could not do before the learning took place. It is important to understand that change in behaviour does not occur immediately.

Management development occurs during in-service training and as with any type of learning has its roots firmly grounded in learning theories. It is important therefore to look at some of the learning approaches to understand the thinking behind management development. It is however beyond the scope of this study to include an exhaustive discussion of all the diverse theories of learning.

For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the following concepts and approaches to learning: experiential learning, self-awareness and reflective practice.

2.6.1 Experiential Learning

Human beings are unique among all living organism in that their primary adaptive specialization lies not in some particular physical form or skill or fits in an ecological niche, but rather in identification with the process of adaptation- in the process of learning. We are thus the learning species, and our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social worlds, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds (Kolb 1984, p. 1).

As mentioned above, management development for school principals would most likely take the form of in-service training. In other words, learning that takes place while the person is in the service or employment of an organisation. This approach to learning is referred to as experiential learning as learning takes place “on the job” or from real work experience.

Kolb (1984, p. 3) eloquently describes experiential learning as follows:

The experiential learning model pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work and personal development. It offers a system of competencies for describing job demands and corresponding educational objectives and emphasizes the critical linkages that can be developed between the classroom and the “real world”. It pictures the workplace as a learning environment that enhances and supplements formal education and can foster personal development through meaningful work and career development opportunities. It stresses the role of formal education in lifelong learning and development of individuals to their full potential as citizens, family members and human beings.

Standing on the shoulders of John Dewey an authoritative voice on experiential learning, Kolb highlights the importance of experience in learning. The view that “experience is the best teacher” comes into play here. Many companies around the world believe that one can only learn to be a good manager by being one. Often high academic qualifications do not prepare one for the actual job. There is often a mismatch between theory and practice. In most cases when new recruits join companies, they have very little understanding about the actual job required by the position. This is a stressful moment for any employee at any level of the organisation. Experiential learning thus closes the gap between theory and practice. In this instance, people learn something that they are familiar with, things that they do every day and they come across situations that confront them directly. Learners are themselves the richest resource for one another and there is a wide range of experience among them and most importantly they learn in order to be able to perform a task effectively and efficiently.

Daresh and Playko (1992, p. 41) use the concept “field-based” learning to refer to the professional development for school administrators.

A comprehensive approach to professional development for school administrators consists of field-based learning or “learning by doing” out in the real world of schools. Field-based programs may serve as ways for administrators to apply theoretical learning and develop their managerial and leadership skills and competencies. Field-based programmes when well designed and in their ideal states, may be used to help people gain important insights into the ways in which schools are actually administered, acquire and develop some practical skills through participation in a wide range of daily administrative duties, and apply knowledge learned in the university to real life settings.

Perhaps it is necessary to point out that the two concepts are not entirely the same, as the target groups differ. In experiential learning the assumption is that the recipient of the training is already part of the establishment, whereas field-based learning presupposes that the recipient comes from an institution of higher learning, like a college or a university. The comparison is only relevant to demonstrate the importance of the hands-on approach to learning as both groups learn by doing and in the real situation.

The Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance (MGSL)'s Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) provides a good example of experiential learning.

A central principle of MGSL is that all development programmes for both management and governance must have a positive impact on practice. The modes of learning are practice-based and include the following:

- Opportunities for discussion, understanding and evaluation of new insights and their implication for practice
- Opportunities to apply new learning in the work environment with on-going support and coaching
- Providing experiential forms of learning with a focus on innovation, creativity and problem solving

The emphasis in this program is on the development of skills through on the job training. The focus of the program is important in the context of management, as it creates the opportunity for the participant to learn things that they do every day and at the same time learn from their experienced colleagues in the field. It is a more hands-on approach to learning. The participants also learn by doing. Bezzina (2001) reported on a management development programme in Malta that applied the experiential learning model. According to Bezzina (2001, p. 142) the aim of the programme is to build upon the "skills and experience of each course participant as they seek to enhance the contribution they already make in their organizations." Some of the objectives of this programme include:

- Help participants learn from their own experience and that of other trainees and educators;
- Give participants real opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge from actually doing their job;
- Improve their interpersonal skills.

2.6.2 Reflective practice

The success of any learning is determined by the ability of a learner to reflect on what is learned and to be able to put new learning into practice. The importance of reflecting on what one is doing becomes part of the learning process. It was Schön (1983) who first suggested that the capacity to reflect on the action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning was one of the characteristics of professional practice. According to McFarlane (2000, p. 100):

Reflective practice is a cyclical process that has as its ultimate goal the professional and personal development of the individual, which may lead to the improvement of the organization. An emphasis on reflective practice teaches the learner to view any experience, good or bad, as an opportunity to learn, and encourages the learner to ask questions and think about the answers...to be alert so as to keep on growing, whether it is on the professional, personal or interpersonal level

The notion of reflective practice requires inquiry in order to gain understanding. It also involves having an interest in what one is doing. It inculcates a sense of responsibility in the learner and makes him/her the main actor in the process of learning. According to this view, learning becomes something that a learner does and not something done to him. The learner is actively involved in his own learning and not merely a passive spectator. The important lesson that results from the reflective practice is a continuous improvement as one strives for a better way of doing things. Learners challenge and question themselves.

In the field of education that is dynamic by nature, reflective practice helps the administrator to stay on course and in touch with the latest developments. School administrators would engage in reflective practice to refine and overhaul their administrative skills in line with the changes taking place. Daresh and Playko (1992, p. 83) stress that “developing reflective skills is one important way to develop a sense of

questioning regarding the value of certain practices and assumptions seen in the field, and this is a critical part of developing a professional identity”. Daresh and Playko pose questions that may guide the process of reflective practice and help one to focus on a sense of what leadership is all about.

- What have I seen out in the field?
- How does what I have seen fit my personal view of what life should be as an administrator?
- Why is what I have seen important?
- What have I learned?
- What do I want to know more about?
- How can I describe what I have seen?
- What else can be learned?
- What is the overall significance of what I have done and seen?
- Now that I have done something so what? (p. 83)

When people ask questions and try to find answers, they develop an understanding of not only what is being learned, but of themselves as well. Asking questions indicates a desire to change the practice and do it in a different way that signifies improvement.

2.6.3 Self-awareness

“Knowing others is wisdom, knowing yourself is Enlightenment.” Toa Tzu

Learning, as the literature suggests, involves making personal decisions and choices. It is something that comes from within rather than being imposed on one. Before one takes a decision one needs to know oneself and one’s immediate environment. To be self aware is to be conscious of weaknesses and strengths. It is self-awareness that propels

individuals to do something about their situation. Without awareness there will be no change and without change there will be no improvement. Self awareness creates the need for personal development. McFarlane (2000, p. 77) affirms this:

The term awareness, in the sense in which it is used in the context of leadership and learning, refers to growth in understanding as a prerequisite for learning and personal growth. This increase in understanding implies the recognition of various aspects in one's thinking and doing, which have a negative and limiting impact on one's personality, relationships, work and, in fact one's whole being, but of which one has been totally ignorant or unaware. An increase in awareness of these aspects, a heightened self-awareness, can therefore be a liberating experience, and the key to personal and organizational renewal and growth.

Self-awareness is the starting point for self-discovery and self-actualization. It is self-awareness that give individuals confidence to take charge of their own destiny. As one grows in self-awareness, one will better understand why one feels what one feels and behave the way one behaves. That understanding gives one the opportunity and freedom to change those things one would like to change and create the life one wants. Self knowledge is a prerequisite for self acceptance, without which change becomes impossible. Self knowledge is empowering which in turn enables a conscious decision to turn wants into reality.

Yukl (2002, p. 196) points out that "self-awareness makes it easier to understand one's own needs and likely reactions if certain events occurred, thereby facilitating the evaluation of alternative solutions." Yukl emphasized the importance of self-awareness as it relates to emotional intelligence in the context of leadership development.

Another important concept in the literature that is closely linked to self-awareness in the context of learning is **self-development**. According to Prokopenko (1998, p. 532) self-development describes "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their own needs. Self-development is effective as people who take initiative in developing their competences learn more things, and learn better,

than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively, waiting to be taught. They enter into the process with more purpose and with better motivation.” He further argued that self-development is natural as it is in tune with the way people become competent. As people grow professionally they develop strong needs to be independent.

The notion of self-development is particularly relevant in a situation where there is a lack of support in the form of organized management development programmes. In my view, self-awareness plays a catalyst role in self-development.

2.6.4 Learning organisations

Earlier references to management development remark that it is an internal program, spearheaded by top management. We also learned that it is the responsibility of the top management to create the necessary atmosphere and conditions for management development to flourish. The approaches to learning such as experiential learning, self-awareness and reflective practice will amount to nothing if the organisation does not encourage a culture of learning among its employees. The organisation needs to facilitate learning in different ways.

According to Moloi (2005, p. 2) a learning organisation refers to:

A school-based change effort by individuals and teams of educators to improve their everyday teaching and learning activities. This improvement can be achieved through open communication, reflection and inquiry process to make school better. A learning organization also includes educators who are capable of thinking differently and are prepared to adopt new mindsets, because schools like all other organizations are confronted with continuous change. These changes include globalization, education policy and curriculum changes

The notion of a learning organisation in this context implies the need to bring about positive change in an organisation through continuous learning. But change cannot occur

without it being initiated by individuals or groups in the organisation as the people make and determine the course of the organisation. A learning organisation is one where the educators at all levels constantly strive to improve their practice and different ways of doing things. It is one that learns constantly and transforms itself to be able to deal proactively with change. Stewart (cited in Hallinger, 1998, p. 492) contends that:

Learning is the keystone to successful adaptation, not only for individuals but also for organizations. Successful organizations tap the knowledge that exists in the workforce and among customers. Leaders in successful organizations create shared knowledge and apply this learning to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

According to Senge et al. (2000, p. 5) the idea of a school that can learn has become increasingly prominent during the last few years and it is becoming clear that that “schools can be recreated, made vital and sustainable renewed by taking a learning orientation”. Morgan (1997, p. 96) is of the opinion that learning organisations have to develop skills and mindsets that embrace environmental change as the norm. They have to be able to “detect early warning signals” that give clues to shifting trends and patterns. And they often have to find ways of inventing completely new ways of seeing their environment.

It is vital to involve everyone in the system in expressing their aspirations, building their awareness and developing their capabilities together. In the context of management development for school managers, the concept of “schools” would be extended to mean the whole system of education. It will be a futile exercise if the idea of a learning organisation was to be confined to schools only and the encompassing system remains untouched. Learning organisations require the involvement of everyone in the system of education to contribute not only to their own learning but to the learning of others as well. In a learning organisation knowledge is shared and it does not remain the property of the individuals. The advantage of learning in these organisations is that transformation is nurtured through creating opportunities for continuous learning.

2.7 Management and leadership skills for the twenty-first century

To understand the role of the principal in terms of management and leadership in the context of education, both concepts require explanation. Bush (2003, p. 7) advises that the two concepts overlap and are similar and need to be given equal prominence if schools are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives. Bennis and Nanus (cited in Yukl, 2002, p. 5) contend that “leadership and management are qualitatively different and mutually exclusive”. According to Yukl (2002) the assumption exists that management and leadership cannot occur in the same person. In other words, some people are managers and other people are leaders. Van der Mescht (1996, p. 12) is of the opinion that the two concepts are “essentially different activities, and yet sufficiently similar to each other to defy attempts to capture the essence of each in a glib definition.” This thinking is in line with what Huber (2004) suggests:

The managing and leading tasks of school leadership are both complex and interrelated, so that there is no clearly defined, specific “role” of school leadership, but at best a coloured patchwork of different aspects. Some areas or role segments at best relate to working with people, others to managing resources like the budget. All are part of the complex range of tasks the school leader faces in the twenty-first century. (p. 671)

This is the view I adopt in discussing the leadership and management skills of school leaders.

2.7.1 Managing change

Organizations are dynamically conservative: that is to say, they fight like mad to remain the same. Only when an organization cannot repel, ignore, contain or transform the threat, it responds to it. But the

characteristic is that of least change: nominal or token change” (Schon, 1971).

Many school managers find themselves in an awkward situation as a result of the changing nature of the environment they work in. Change is inevitable and is a daily occurrence. Change in curriculum, change in the system of education as a whole, change in policies etc. Today’s school managers are constantly challenged by these changes which have implications for the way schools are managed. Change is a necessary evil that has both advantages and disadvantages depending on one’s approach it. It is for this reason that principals should be equipped with the skills to manage change.

In the past, most training has been aimed at helping managers to manage the status quo more efficiently, but as the environment becomes more turbulent so it becomes more important to develop their skills in coping with change and indeed steering it. Management of change is a key task of this time. The call for change may spring from outside the school or educational system or from within (Everard, Morrison & Wilson, 2004, p.237).

Educational management operates within a particular context or environment which is not static and neither is it stable. Changes in the environment affect the operations of schools. In Namibia for example, a host of changes were introduced at independence. These changes caught many school managers off balance. Corporal punishment, which had been the dominant way to discipline learners, was abolished. Fullan (1992, p. 19) cautions:

The endless supply of new policies, programmes and procedures ensures that the dilemma remains active. The expectation that heads should be leaders in the implementation of changes which they had no part in developing and may not understand is especially troublesome. It becomes all the more irritating when those immediately above them also have not been involved in change development and may not fully understand programmes either.

2.7.2 Managing resources

Without people, organizations would not exist. Indeed without them, there would be no need for leaders or for leadership. People are not, of course, the only resource of interest to organizations but without them, and without organizations, there would be no need for either the other resources or for the management of them. It is people themselves who create a need for leadership and management, both of people and other resources such as finance, time and premises. This is because, as individuals, people have drives and needs, values and beliefs: all which influence the way they behave and respond to one another. Moreover, it is recognized that an organization without vision without direction, without order and without discipline is one in which people's performance varies and where individuals may not fulfill their potential. This is not only detrimental for the organization as a whole but affects each person. Thus, people are integral to both leadership and management. (Anderson, 2003, p. 13)

The above quote sets the scene for the rest of this section and emphasizes the importance of resources, particularly human resources in an organisation. It stresses that people are an indispensable resource and therefore requires careful consideration from the school leadership. It follows that leading and managing resources in an educational organisation are specialized activities that require special skills. Hughes (in Bush, 2003, p. 85) suggested that the role of the principals could be conceptualized as both "leading professional and chief executive officer." According to him the role of a leading professional is to provide an effective framework within which teachers could work with considerable autonomy. The role of chief executive officer involves managing a school as an organisation, directing, planning and coordinating its resources and activities in a coherent manner.

It is absolutely crucial that people and other resources are managed properly in order to realize the objective of the school. In this context, the ultimate goal is to ensure effective teaching and learning. School leaders spend a considerable amount of time trying to

motivate teachers, learners and parents to get the best out of them in terms of performance. Bush (2003, p. 3) argues that:

A potential problem is that individual and organizational objectives may be incompatible, or that organizational aims satisfy some but not all individual aspirations. It is reasonable to assume that most teachers want their school or college to pursue policies which are in harmony with their own interests and preferences.

A question every manager, especially educational managers grapples with is how to make the subordinates happy and motivated to contribute to the success of the organisation. As critical resources, people can make or break the school. Staff members want to associate themselves with a school and leadership that care about their situation. Staff members, parents and even learners want to have a voice in the affairs of their school. They want to participate in decision making. They want recognition and respect from their supervisors and colleagues. It is therefore important that school managers know how to deal with the people in order to create *esprit de corps*..

Motivating people to work effectively, however, requires another set of leadership skills altogether. Amongst others, according to Yukl (2002) a leader requires **emotional intelligence** to cope with the pressure of managing people. Yukl (2002, p. 196) claims that emotional intelligence can help leaders solve complex problems, make better decisions, plan how to use their time effectively, adapt their behaviour to the situation, and manage crises. Goleman (cited in Matthew & Crow, 2003, p. 48) defines emotional intelligence as a “different way of being smart, it includes knowing what your feelings are and using your feelings to make good decisions.” Goleman further maintained that emotional intelligence involves being motivated and remaining hopeful and optimistic when setbacks crop up as they usually do, it is empathy, knowing what people around you are thinking, a social skill of getting along with other people (cited in Matthew & Crow, p. 48).

In a study of principals who are both empowered and empowering in the USA, Glasman (1995) found that the administration of curriculum, staff and school finance were very high on the list of tasks of principals. Empowered principals refers to principals who are supported by their supervisor through training courses that enhance management and leadership capabilities, whereas empowering principals refers to principals who support their teachers in a variety of ways to carry out their teaching responsibilities successfully. The management and leadership of instructional activities make the principal first and foremost an **instructional leader**. Bush (2003) asserts that instructional leadership is a unique kind of leadership focusing on teaching and learning and on the behaviours of teachers in working with students. Instructional leadership is particularly important where schools struggle to cope with the demands of curriculum changes that frustrate the teaching staff. It was born out of the need to strengthen the capacity of the school principal to effectively guide the teaching and learning activities, which are the core business of a school.

Working with people also requires that leaders create an atmosphere conducive to empowering others to share a common vision. It is only when people feel empowered that they in return contribute fully to the development of the school. In this situation a leader requires yet another skill to inspire the staff and other stakeholders to achieve a specific objective. For example the notion of a “school improvement” plan requires the support and involvement of teachers, learners and the entire community if the desired change is to be realized. Burns (cited in Huen, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2002) claimed that **transformational leadership** would be appropriate in this situation as it “represents the transcendence of self-interest by both leader and led” (p. 372). It is, however Bennis (cited in Huen et al., 2002) that captures my attention as he eloquently stated that transformational leadership involves the “ability of a person to reach the souls of others in a fashion which raises human consciousness, builds meanings and inspires human intent that is the source of power” (p. 372).

2.8 Management development: international trends and developments

Although literature on management development in other fields indicate that the phenomenon is not entirely new (Taylor & Lippitt, 1975; Ashton, 1975 and Prokopenko, 1998), the same cannot be said when it comes to educational leadership and management. This is not uncharacteristic of educational leadership and management, because as a field of study, educational leadership and management remains a relatively young field and owes its existence to the more established disciplines (Bush, 2003; Bottery, 1992). Management development for educational leaders in the international context is a very recent phenomenon (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Bolam, 2003; Huber 2004; Riley & Mulford, 2007). Despite being a recent phenomenon, there have been quite a number of positive developments in management development for school leaders since the 1980's particularly in the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and many other countries in Europe (Huber, 2004; Cardno et al., 2005). Huber (2004, p. 676) observes:

At first sight, there may appear to be an international consensus about the importance of school leaders and their development. On looking more carefully, however, it is apparent that a number of countries have engaged in this issue more rigorously than others. While in some countries discussions of school leader development are mainly rhetoric, elsewhere concrete steps have been taken to provide significant development opportunities for school leaders.

This quote sets the scene in viewing management development in the international context. What we see is a commitment from certain countries to put policies and structures in place for management development of school principals, while in other countries management development has been on the agenda for many years but no real steps have been taken to implement these programmes. In the United Kingdom for example, the approach to leadership development has been robust in recent years. Riley & Mulford (2007) report extensively on the highly acclaimed England's National College for School Leadership which one American scholar referred to as "the most

promising model we saw, providing examples of good practice that educational administration programs might seek to emulate.” In other parts of the world including South East Asia efforts are being made to address the situation of school leaders with regard to their management development needs (Hallinger, 1998). In Africa, the trend in management development tends to lean towards the maxim that “leaders are born and not made.” In a study in Africa, Bush & Oduro (2006, p. 359) found that “principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching records rather than their leadership potential. Induction and support are usually limited”. However, the same study also singled out the Seychelles and South Africa as countries in Africa that have made ‘significant progress’ in implementing management development programmes for school principals. The Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance in South Africa is hailed as one of the examples of a success story in the making. Madasi (2004) reports on a host of management development activities embarked upon by the Department of Education in South Africa, albeit with mixed results.

2.9 Management development in Namibia

The immediate goal of the new Government of the Republic of Namibia at independence in 1990 was to dismantle the different education authorities created by the colonial administration. This paved the way for a unified system of education under one roof: the Ministry of Education and Culture. The new government inherited a sector with a large number of unqualified staff across the spectrum. This was a daunting task.

The Namibian education system is characterized by acute disparities, inequities, and tensions. Policies of racial discrimination have left a legacy of differential allocation of resources to different racial groups. Some schools have highly educated teachers, extensive equipment, and relatively small classes. At the same time, other schools have teachers who have limited training and classrooms that are overcrowded and poorly equipped (Namibia. MBEC 1993, p. 19).

This outlines the situation that confronted the new government at independence. The training of the education personnel was one of the areas that was neglected in the past and had implications on the implementation of the new education system. Management development was non-existent. Prior to independence the country had no university and relied heavily on the South African institutions to provide training to its students in different fields of study. The need for management development for administrators is not entirely foreign as is articulated in the policy document entitled *Toward Education for All* shortly after independence. The policy document Namibia. MBEC (1993, p. 162) states:

As we develop and modify this organizational structure, we are also learning how to operate it effectively. Many educators and administrators have assumed responsibilities for which their professional preparation and experience was limited...hence we must be sure that we develop an effective programmed of in-service education not only for our teachers, but also for our managerial and administrative personnel at both national and regional level.

This was a commitment undertaken by the policy makers of the Ministry of Education to facilitate management development to equip school managers for their task in view of the changing responsibilities. Despite the commitment on paper, Pfau (2000) and Kantema (2001) reveal little has happened to suggest that principals of schools are now better supported in terms of management development. The Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme, a strategic plan of the government crafted to rescue the declining state of education support the views expressed above.

The Ministry of Education does not require formal management training as a pre-condition for promoting teachers to become principals or heads of department. At present, opportunities for professional staff development of managers are insufficient. Principals have expressed a strong demand for professional development and training that would enable them to manage school affairs, lead others, promote achievement

of the school mission...provide advice and guidance to professional staff on educational matters and develop efficient use of resources. (Namibia. MoE, 2006, p. 25)

It would be an overstatement to suggest nothing has happened in the form of management development since independence. Some regional offices in collaboration with the development partners initiated management programmes to assist principals to cope with the challenges posed by their positions. These were regional arrangements and did not cater for the majority of school principals in Namibia. Udjombala (2006) reports on one such initiative in the Ondangwa East that helped the participating principals to experience “personal changes and professional” (p.i).

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

People are always tellers of tales.
They live surrounded by their stories and
The stories of others; they see everything
That happens to them through those stories
And they try to live their lives as
If they were recounting them. Jean-Paul Sartre, 1964

This chapter focuses on the research process and is divided into three main sections. The first section deals with the research paradigms I employed in terms of their epistemological and ontological difference. A brief overview of each of the two paradigms will be discussed. For the purpose of this study only two paradigms, namely: positivism and interpretivism are discussed. The positivist paradigm is also referred to as quantitative research whereas the interpretive paradigm is also referred to as constructivist, naturalistic or qualitative research. The second section of this chapter highlights the rationale behind the decision I took to operate within an interpretive orientation. One of the critical decisions one needs to make in designing one's study is the paradigm within which one will situate one's work

Your selection of a paradigm is not entirely a matter of free choice. You have already made many assumptions about the world, your topic, and how we can understand these, even if you have never consciously examined these. Choosing a paradigm or tradition primarily involves

assessing which paradigm best fits with your own assumptions and methodology preference (Maxwell, 2005, p. 36).

Choosing a particular research orientation is thus closely linked to the nature of the topic being investigated. It is therefore important that I justify the choice of my orientation in relation to the research question. The data collection methods and techniques, the sample and sampling techniques all fall under this section. The third and last section of this chapter deals with validity and ethical considerations which are very important components of the research process and contribute to the quality of the research.

3.2 Research paradigms

Even though much research is undertaken without first taking the paradigm(s) upon which it is based into consideration, it remains true that “methodologies are very much a puppet of their underlying assumption” (Fien & Hillcoat cited in MacFarlane, 2000, p. 10). In line with this argument, it is appropriate to provide a working definition of the term “paradigm” before venturing into the discussion regarding their epistemological and ontological assumptions. The clarification of the term is important as the terms “paradigms”, “orientations”, “traditions”, “frameworks”, and “approaches” are used interchangeably (Cohen et al., 2000). Patton (2002, p. 69) offers a definition:

A paradigm is a world view- a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world. As such, paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners. Paradigms tell us 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 strength and weakness- a strength in that it makes action relatively easy, a weakness in that the very reason for action is hidden in the unquestionable assumption of the paradigm.

Patton further said that paradigms are “really about epistemology, ontology and philosophy of science and as such they are important theoretical constructs for illuminating fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality” (2002, p. 69)

Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 5) view paradigms as “a set of beliefs that guide action. Paradigms deal with first principles or ultimates.” These explanations suggest that paradigms answer the how, why and what question of a research design. Paradigms thus provide researchers with a model to operate in. Using paradigms also helps us to investigate phenomena and arrive at certain conclusions that provide knowledge and understanding. Paradigms are in my view, different ways of thinking on how to go about doing research, which include the methodology, the methods and techniques of collecting data, the sampling procedures, data analysis etc.

According to Mzarek (1993) the term “paradigms” came into existence through the work of Kuhn (1970) and claimed that through the years different scholars have used the term in a simpler way that do not “convey the image most of us associate with Kuhn’s presentation. To Kuhn, and to most of us, a paradigm is something different; at the very least it implies a more sophisticated construct than “pattern, example and model.” Disinger (in Mzarek 1993, p. 20) put it in this way:

In Kuhn’s view a paradigm is an overarching conceptual construct, an understanding of how the world or segment of it operates. Once established it becomes widely accepted, guiding the behaviour of most people who have occasion to be concerned about it. A paradigm includes exemplars to which those in the field refer; these are qualitatively different from pre-paradigms or previous paradigm exemplars.

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 23) paradigms are defined by the meta-theoretical assumptions on which they are based. This implies a commonality of purpose which binds the work of a group of theorists together, especially in terms of the basic questions with which they approach social theory. The views expressed above are also shared by Maxwell (2005, p. 36) who views paradigms as:

A set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we can understand it (epistemology), assumptions that tend to be shared by researchers working in a specific field or tradition. Paradigms also typically include specific methodological strategies linked to these assumptions, and identify particular studies that are seen as exemplifying these assumptions and methods

Bassey (1995, p. 12) provides a description which I consider to be more straightforward. According to him a research paradigm is 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.

The explanations above provide sufficient information as to what paradigms entail. Paradigms in my view represent various acceptable perspectives on how to embark on a research journey, which route to take and the tools one needs in order to accomplish such a mission. Paradigms are benchmarks of an academic inquiry. Perhaps it is fair to argue that no single paradigm has all the answer to all the problems. It all depends on the nature of the problem under investigation. Simply put, different research problems require different approaches or paradigms.

Writers generally identify three or four different paradigms or orientations to research. Connole (1998, pp. 17-18) for example, identifies four orientations, namely, critical, deconstructive, empiricist and the interpretive paradigms. The first three are of little relevance to this study, but I would like to touch briefly on how the empiricist position (positivism) contrasts with interpretivism which is the orientation of my study.

3.2.1 The positivist paradigm

Positivism assumes an objective world hence it often searches for facts conceived in terms of specified correlation and associations among variables. It is associated with

many specific social theories. According to Connole (1998, pp. 17-18) the positivist orientation is based on the following assumptions:

- The approach is modeled on classical physical science investigation
- Empiricism assumes that reality is unitary and it can only be understood by empirical analytic inquiry i.e. the scientific method
- Empiricism follows a disciplined sensory-perceptual observation; i.e. rules for observation
- Observation is done through clear and unambiguous rules which are not modified by the setting and are totally independent of it
- Empiricist inquiry generates evidence and generalisable laws which are not affected by contexts and have nothing to do with the way in which they were discovered in the first place. Objectivity depends upon the removal of error and bias which is related specifically to the logic of observation and measurement
- Prediction and control are inherent in the inquiry, resulting in technically exploitable knowledge
- Science and scientific knowledge are inherently value-neutral

Clearly, the application of scientific methods is at the heart of the positivistic thinking. Science is seen as the only way to get to the “truth” to understand the world well enough so that it might be predicted and controlled. Proponents of the positivistic orientation believe that knowledge can be “revealed” or “discovered” through the use of scientific methods and procedures. The main critique leveled at the positivistic orientation, according to Neumann (2000) is that it reduces people to numbers and its concern with abstract laws and formulae are not relevant to the actual lives of real people.

3.2.2 The interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm is also referred to by scholars and researchers as naturalistic, constructivism or qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bassey,

1995; Creswell, 2003). Interpretivism has its roots in hermeneutics, the study of theory and practice of interpretation. It developed in the 19th century as a philosophical theory of meaning and understanding, and also of literary interpretation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 58). According to Mertova & Webster (2007, p. 1) interpretive research is a “narrative inquiry set in human stories of experience. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the human experience, the world depicted through their stories”.

According to Cohen et al. (2000, p.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 ...understand from within.” The interpretive approach focuses on action. Actions are only meaningful to us in so far as we are able to ascertain the intentions of actors to share their experiences. A large number of our everyday interactions with one another rely on such shared experience.

The essence of the interpretive paradigm is captured in the quote above. Interpretive studies take a humanistic approach to the research process whereby the human experience becomes central to understanding the phenomenon being investigated. There is a saying in the African culture that suggests that “the only person who really feels the bite of the shoes is the one wearing it”. In my view this saying resonates with the thinking behind the interpretive paradigm that emphasizes the “lived experience” of the people being studied. Another important assumption worth mentioning that is fundamental to the interpretive paradigm is the question of how the world is constructed by sharing the meaning. Nieuwenhuis (2007, p.59) summarizes the assumptions underpinning the interpretive paradigm as follows:

- Human life can only be understood from within. It cannot be observed from some external reality. Interpretivism therefore focuses on people’s subjective experiences, on how people “construct” the social world by sharing meanings, and how they interact with or relate to each other.

- Social life is a distinctively human product. Interpretivists assume that reality is not objectively determined, but is socially constructed. The underlying assumption is that by placing people in their social contexts, there is a greater opportunity to understand the perceptions they have of their own activities.
- The human mind is the purposive source of origin of meaning. By exploring the richness, depth and complexity of phenomena we can begin to develop a sense of understanding of the meanings imparted by people to phenomena and their social context.
- Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world. Interpretivism proposes that there are multiple and not single realities of phenomena, and that these realities differ across time and space. As our knowledge of the social world and the realities being constructed increase, it enriches our theoretical and conceptual framework.
- The social world does not “exist” independently of human knowledge. As researchers our own knowledge and understanding of phenomena constantly influence us in terms of type of questions ask and the way we conduct our research.

The ultimate aim of interpretive research is to offer a perspective of a situation and to analyze the situation under study to provide insight into the way in which a particular group of people make sense of their situation or the phenomena they encounter. One of the greatest strengths of the qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions it yields. Bassey (1995, p. 13) contends that:

Concepts of reality in the interpretive perspective can vary from one person to another. Instead of reality being “out there”, it is the observers who are “out there”. They are part of the world which they are observing and, by observing, may change what they are trying to observe. The interpretive researcher considers that the rationality of one observer may not be the same as the rationality of another, and so accepts that when these two observers talk two each other the world may not seem ‘rational’ and ‘make sense’”.

The role of the researcher is another area where the proponents of the interpretive paradigm claim to have the upper hand over the positivists. In the interpretive paradigm the researcher is part of the process as he interacts with the participants in the research. By so doing he gains a better understanding of both the people and the phenomena being studied. Perhaps it is important to mention that human beings are unpredictable, they have feelings and emotion that can have an influence on the study so these variables need to be taken into consideration.

The interpretive paradigm has been criticized for its emphasis on individual experiences and perceptions at the expense of focusing on the social structure which influence those experience and perceptions (Van Rensburg cited in MacFarlane, 2000, p .25). Another critique leveled at the interpretive paradigm is its subjectivity and the failure of the approach to generalize its findings beyond the situation studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 60).

3.3 Why the interpretive research paradigm?

If a choice were possible, I would naturally prefer simple, rapid, and infallible methods. If I could find such methods, I would avoid the time-consuming, difficult and suspect variants of “participant observation” with which I have become associated (Dalton, 1965).

I conducted my study within the interpretive research paradigm. Each paradigm espouses a particular position on how a study should be carried out. Maxwell (2005, p. 37) advises:

Choosing a particular paradigm primarily involves assessing which paradigm best fits with your own assumption and methodological preferences. Trying to work within a paradigm that does not fit your assumptions is like trying to do a physically, demanding job in clothes that don't fit- at best you'll be uncomfortable, at worst it will keep you from doing the job well. Such a lack of fit may not be obvious at the outset; it may emerge only as you develop your conceptual framework

In my reading of the interpretive paradigm literature, I found out that the emphasis of this paradigm is on trying to understand the subjective world of human experience, on how people “construct” the social world by sharing meanings and how they interact and relate to each other (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Cohen et al., 2000). The interpretive paradigm thus embodied elements and characteristics that I needed to conduct my study. Neumann (2000, p. 71) argues that an interpretive researcher wants to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied or how individuals experience daily life. The interpretive paradigm afforded me the opportunity to get closer to the participants and interact with them face to face. In that way I learnt a lot from the people I interviewed. At the same time I viewed the research as a learning curve that culminated in acquiring a better understanding of the research problem. The goal of my study was to understand the *principals’ perceptions and experience of their management development needs*. It was thus important that I talked to the principals themselves and learned from their experience and how they perceived their management development needs. After all, no other person is better placed than the principals themselves to understand their needs with regard to the phenomena under investigation.

My interest in the topic was to learn and gain knowledge of the situation facing principals as far as their development needs are concerned. The knowledge gained from the study would help me not only to understand the plight of the school principals, but to devise ways in my work that could address that need. I was aware that knowledge tends to be context-specific (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In other words, my understanding of the principals’ needs could not be generalized to any other context. I believe that the experience gained through the exercise, however remains valuable and could serve as the basis for future reference.

Another important aspect that encouraged me to work within the interpretive paradigm was the fact that it allowed me to employ several and versatile methods and techniques of gathering data. In that way triangulation was possible and it contributed to the quality of the research.

Collecting information using a variety of sources and methods also provides opportunity for triangulation. This strategy reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating (Fielding & Fielding cited in Maxwell, 2005, p. 93).

3.4 Sample and sampling method

The research was conducted in the Kavango region of Namibia. Five principals from different circuits and two inspectors of education formed the sample of this study. The five principals and two inspectors were conveniently selected on the basis of the proximity of their schools and circuits. Cohen et al. (2000, p. 102) claimed that convenience sampling is strategically appropriate for a study of this nature and scope.

3.5 Data collection methods and techniques

The interpretive approach afforded me the opportunity to combine interviews and document analysis in gathering the data. Patton (2002, p. 48) argued that studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method than studies that use several methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks. The use of a variety of methods and sources also provided opportunity for triangulation which in turn enriched my data.

3.5.1 Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews to obtain information from the respondents. Conducting interviews in this manner afforded me the flexibility to ask probing questions and follow

up on responses that were not clear. Respondents were given ample time and freedom to speak their minds without restriction, but I made sure to guide them through follow-up questions to stick to the issues under discussion. This was not an easy exercise as participants spoke at length and in the process some of them started mixing up issues. I prepared an interview guide with the key questions on it that helped me to monitor the conversation. Patton (2002, p. 344) claimed that a guide “provides a framework within which the interviewer would develop questions, sequence those questions, and make decisions about which information to pursue in greater length.” Brynard and Hanekom (2006, p. 40) emphasized that the usefulness of interviews in stimulating thought cannot be sufficiently stressed. The meeting of two minds in face-to face conversation frequently illuminates a problem and the semi-structured interview allows opportunities to pursue these further. These are examples of questions for the principals.

- What do you consider as your major responsibilities?
- What are the problem areas?
- Do you think you need management development to fulfill your role?
- What kind of support do you currently receive from your supervisor or elsewhere?

Two inspectors of education were also interviewed. In Namibia, Inspectors of Education are responsible for the management development of principals, and their views were helpful. These are examples of the questions for Inspectors.

- What management development programmes are available?
- Do you think principals require management development to fulfill their responsibilities?
- What are the content and substance of these programmes?

The conversations were tape recorded and transcribed to supplement the notes.

3.5.2 Document analysis

Document analysis included scrutinizing the job description of both the principals and inspectors of education. I also looked at their daily and weekly plans, the management development policies existing at the school and at circuit level, plus the role they played in the cluster system and constituency development committee. The Principals' Manual was another major important source of information in determining the responsibilities of the principals. At the regional office where principals are recruited I examined the recruitment policy, the induction programmes and the management development policy. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p. 276) argued that document analysis and records are a useful source of information, readily available, stable and easily accessible. Document analysis served as useful data and complemented the data collected through interviews. This method of gathering data also serves the purpose of triangulation. I kept a research journal where I made notes of all information related to my research activities.

3.6 Data analysis

My primary source of data were the interviews I conducted, and data obtained from document analysis were used to complement or confirm interview data where appropriate. The use of a variety of methods in collecting data resulted in a considerable amount of data. I immediately started looking for patterns from the answers given by the respondents. In my view this was the beginning of my data analysis. As the interviews progressed I started to identify categories within the patterns. Cohen et al. (2000, p. 267) claimed that data analysis is not a separate phase that can be marked out at some singular time during the inquiry. Data analysis begins with the very first data collection. After the interviews I continued with the transcription which helped to understand the patterns and relationships of meaning in the data. I was able to distinguish the less important from the significant data.

The next step in the analysis of data involved coding. The main idea at this stage was to make meaning out of the data through categorizing, theme searching and grouping. This is what is commonly known as inductive analysis of data. Maxwell (2005, p. 96) refers to coding as “to fracture the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of concepts”. This process gave a better picture of the information collected that culminated into the data presentation.

3.7 Ethical issues

At all times I ensured that my respondents’ rights and dignity were protected and respected. I followed the research protocol by obtaining permission from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education. Merriam (2002, p. 313) argues that “ethics begins with the conception of the research project and ends with how we present and share with others what we have learned”. My research activities only commenced after I received permission from the Head Office. I visited schools to explain to the participants what my study entailed. I also produced a letter from my supervisor indicating the areas I was investigating and the reason for the research. My participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis. I also explained to them that they had the right to withdraw from the study if they so wished. I conducted myself in a proper and professional manner and created a relaxed atmosphere. I was open and the discussions were frank. I treated the participants with respect at all times and respected their cultural values and political opinions. Most importantly I kept a low profile.

3.8 Validity considerations

I knew from the outset that the success of my research depended largely on its validity. It was against this background that I followed the laid down research procedures and protocols. Cohen et al. (2000, p. 105) advised that if a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless. Validity determined the legitimacy of the research and I had a moral duty to ensure that people believed in what I presented to them. To enhance validity I kept a record of data and was able to retrieve it when needed. I believed the use of different tools in data collection provided validity through triangulation. Member checking was guaranteed and a clear audit trail was kept.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 3, I provided a methodological framework for my research that explained in detail how data was collected using a combination of methods and techniques. I worked within the interpretive paradigm since the goal was to understand the *perception* and *experiences* of school principals with regard to their management development needs. According to Neumann (2000) “an interpretive researcher wants to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied or how individuals experience daily life” (p. 71). Interpretive studies assume that people create their own subjective meaning as they interact with and understand the world around them. My role was to understand the phenomena through accessing the meaning participants assigned to them. During the interview process I took a back seat to allow the interviewees freedom to give their views and experience of the subject under discussion. With my research question in mind I developed categories and sub-categories from the data which formed the basis of my presentation in this chapter. It is important to note that the categories identified do not only derive from the interviews but also from document analysis.

In this chapter I present the data as articulated by the participants I interviewed. Five school principals and two inspectors of education from the Kavango region of Namibia participated in the study. For the purpose of identification and in line with ethical considerations I used letters to represent the name of the respondents. I have also assigned the same letters to denote their schools or circuits. For example the school headed by principal A is referred to as school A and the circuit managed by inspector M

is referred to as circuit M. A brief profile of each participant in the study is provided to give an idea of their experience and qualifications they bring to the study.

4.2 Profiles of the participants

Principal A: Is male and has been a principal of a Senior Secondary school for thirteen years. He holds a Higher Education Diploma and a post-graduate Diploma in Educational Management. The school has over seven hundred learners and twenty five teachers.

Principal B: Is female and this is her first year as principal of a Junior Secondary school (grades 8-10). She holds a Higher Education Diploma and a Bachelor of Education (Honours). This a small school with 300 learners and 15 teachers.

Principal C: Is male and has been a principal of the Combined School (grades 1-10) for seventeen years. He holds a Basic Education Teacher's Diploma. The school has seven hundred and fifty learners and twenty six teachers. The school is a Cluster Centre and caters for the needs of five other schools in the area.

Principal D: Is female and has been a principal of the Senior Primary school for two years (grades 1-7). She holds a Diploma in Education and is enrolled for a Further Diploma in Educational Management. The school has six hundred and thirty two learners and twenty teachers.

Principal E: Is female and has been a principal of the Junior Secondary school for eight years. She holds a Diploma in Education. The school has six hundred and seventy learners and twenty one teachers.

Inspector of Education M: Is male and has been in this position for fifteen years. He was a principal for five years before his promotion to the rank of Inspector of Education. He holds a Bachelor of Education (under-graduate) and a Bachelor of Education

(Honours). He manages a circuit with twenty schools and over three hundred teachers including principals. This is one of the biggest circuits in the region with a large number of learners.

Inspector of Education Z: Is male and has been in this position for twelve years. He served as a principal for six years before his promotion to the current position. He holds a Diploma in Education. He manages a circuit with thirty eight schools and over two hundred and fifty teachers including principals.

4.3 Categories and sub-categories

As the categories and sub-categories identified emerged mainly from interviews and document analysis, efforts were made to reconcile and reorganize categories in line with the research question. The actual words of the respondents will be quoted throughout the presentation of the data. Where necessary an explanation will be provided to give a clear meaning of the category with the subsequent sub-categories. The following main categories with their sub-categories will be presented: perceived benefits of management development, the learning approaches to management development, the perceived needs of principals, perceived areas of responsibilities and perceived outside support

4.3.1 Perceived benefits of management development

This category addresses the key aspect of the research question as it allows the principals to give their perception of management development, worded differently, the perceived benefits of participating in professional development. It also addresses the question of whether principals value professional developments as a way of growing professionally. Principals and Inspectors were asked why they thought management development programmes were important. Generally principals with their supervisor, inspectors of schools expressed a belief in the importance of management development. The following

sub-categories form part of the perceived benefits of management development: empowerment and capacity building, improved communication, and an encouragement of a culture of lifelong learning.

4.3.2 Empowerment and capacity building

Principals and inspectors of education see professional development as a way to build capacity and empower principals in particular to manage their schools effectively. Principals perceived management development as being in-service or on the job training which increased their confidence in dealing with administrative issues on a daily basis.

Principal A summarized the importance of management development as follows:

For sure professional development that comes my way will be welcomed wholeheartedly, because there is no way that we going to be successful without having these professional development for principals in our region

Principal D said:

Professional development or in-service training is very important as it helps us to grow professionally. I was trained as a teacher but managing a school is something new to me...I am struggling to cope.

Principal C echoed the same sentiments, he said:

As a principal I remain a learner and continue to learn every day and acquire new skills of management. I want to be a happy principal, empowered to manage my school in an efficient manner”

Inspector M also believed that management development could help the principals in his circuit to cope with the changing system. He said:

I think it is very very important that principals are developed professionally. The reason why I am saying so is because currently the system is being reviewed that is why if the person is not trained to match the changing system, he will remain behind”

4.3.3 Improved communication

Communication in this particular instance referred not only to communication at school level but across schools and within the cluster and beyond circuits. It also referred to exchange programmes initiated by the principals to learn from other principals. Communication here is extended to stakeholders in education. Principals generally believed that management development could lead to improved communication and create a better learning and teaching atmosphere at school. As principals learn new ways of doing things, it would open up opportunities to share experiences and good practices with other principals. Improved communication among school leaders with their stakeholders creates an inviting image in a school where parents feel part and parcel of the school and contribute positively in different ways. Improved communication leads to the sharing of resources among principals.

Principal C said:

Management development or training will help me to communicate and share experiences with other principals. We are so isolated even within the cluster, we do not interact on a regular basis. I want to learn from others

Principal D is of the opinion that management development could serve as a unifying tool for principals as they would be open to each other and share resources. She said:

As a newly appointed principal I will feel free to communicate and in that way we as principal will be united and speak with one voice.

Parents and other stakeholders will also feel free to come to school, because our doors are open

Principal B felt that management development would help schools to open up and learn from schools in other regions. She supported the view expressed above and said:

Exchange programmes could be organized to schools which perform better in a certain region. I am sure that such visits would broaden our understanding and help us to grow professionally”.

Inspector M concurred with the principals:

You see my principals are so isolated, if they are trained I think communication will improve and they will no longer rely on me or the circuit office to provide them with information. Some of my principals do not know that they can learn from their colleagues in the circuit that is why they always come to me” I want to see a situation whereby information flows freely within the circuit up to the regional office.

4.3.4 Increased morale

Principals interviewed perceived management development as a way to motivate them and their staff to work better. On the other hand there was a general feeling that management training could lead to recognition from the employers in monetary terms. Increased confidence leads to better interpersonal relationships between school leaders and their staff and even the parents. Principals felt that management development would put them in a better position to guide and inspire others to support the vision. They also indicated that performance of both teachers and learners could be enhanced if the leaders felt secure in their positions and were motivated. Principal generally feel that management development could increase their morale and ultimately their self-esteem.

Principal A said: “Management development can stimulate us to work better than before, because we will be sure of what to do. You see at this moment we always consult because we lack confidence, but if we are trained I am sure there situation will change”. I will be motivated and in the process inspire my colleagues and learners to give their best”

Principal D feels that the status of the principals could be restored and in so doing gain respect from both teachers and parents. She affirmed:

“We are not respected at all and I think the position of a principal is taken for granted. If we are trained it will lift us up and the community will view us differently. This could lead to trust and change people’s perceptions about principals”

Inspector Z supported this view:

“The position of a principal is no longer the same as it used to be. That has an effect on the confidence and performance of a person. People in the community and some teachers do not give them the respect they deserve. If they are trained I feel things will change and their confidence will improve”

4.3.5 Encourages a culture of lifelong learning

Principals interviewed generally feel that management development could pave the way for continuous learning. They were aware of the challenges posed by their position and felt a real need to keep abreast with developments in the field or they would be overtaken by events. The majority of the principals interviewed saw management development as a vehicle to transform their schools into learning organisations and promote the culture of lifelong learning. They felt their teachers would be motivated and inspired to look for opportunities to upgrade their qualifications. Principals were of the opinion that

management development would benefit them as they would learn while on the job and in the real situation. They also saw it as an opportunity to build learning communities and in so doing parents could be motivated to get involved in the education of their children.

Principal E said: “Management training will encourage me to keep in touch with the developments in the field of education and remain a student for the rest of my life. It will also give a very good example to my teachers when they see me studying. I am sure the whole school will be turned into a learning centre”

Principal B maintains: “The good thing of this type of training is that you learn while you are working. You learn things that you do and not irrelevant things. It also encourages you to upgrade yourself. So you basically learn for as long as you are a principal, because every day new things are coming”

Inspector M concurred with the principals:

What I want to see is a situation whereby principals are encouraged to learn because this is a big problem in this area principals do not want to read so they stagnate. I believe management training will open their eyes to seek for opportunities to learn. I want them to turn their schools into learning organizations where everybody from a principal to the learners engages in some kind of learning. In that way they will grow individually and collectively

4.4 Approaches to learning

This category covers the responses on the learning approaches management development programmes should take. It refers to what the participants felt were the appropriate ways of learning and the way management development programmes should be conducted. The respondents generally felt that the best way to learn is “on the job”. According to them it is best when the learning is structured in such way that it is relevant to what they do

everyday, instead of learning things that would not help them to improve their practice. They all agreed that management development should provide them with the skills they need in order to become better managers. Many of the respondents felt that they preferred a hand-on approach instead of memorizing too many facts that might not be relevant to their needs. There was also a strong emphasis on team work and sharing of experience with other principals participating in the same programme or others who have gone through similar courses. The respondents also stated that there was a need for them to learn from other principals in other regions and felt that management development programmes should include study tours to these regions and where possible arrangements should be made to visit one or two well managed schools in neighboring countries.

4.4.1 Experiential learning

Learning “on the job” came out strongly in the responses of the participants in the study. The respondents felt that this type of learning was relevant to their needs and could help them improve their skills. They said learning on the job is more appropriate because one learned from the real situation. They indicated that this approach to learning would give them confidence to participate as the learning situation and the materials would be relevant to the context.

Principal B said:

I expect that management development or training will be based on what I am doing currently ...I mean real situation. I want to learn things that are relevant to the needs of the school. It is not like in the past where we learnt so many things which were detached from the real situation.

Principal C stated:

I believe the whole idea is to be able to do the work effectively, I therefore feel that the program should take a practical approach to confront real situation. For example the issue of developing a school

development plan, I would like to see that we do it right there so that the facilitators can evaluate whether we are on the right track or not.

Principal E echoed:

It is best when one learns while on the job, doing the same thing unlike learning things that are not relevant to your situation. This is the reason why many of us are failing to run our schools. We have learned so many things that emphasized theory but we can not put them in practice. This is why I strongly feel that management development training should combine theory and practice, maybe more practice and less theoretical work.

Inspector M agreed:

If I had the power to decide I would say the management development programmes should be structured in such a way that it is relevant to the needs of the school. Things like school development planning, problem-solving, financial management, IT etc. should be covered. But most importantly, principals must be in a position to do it. So they must learn by doing, not just theory. They will learn better when they deal with real situation.

4.4.2 Teamwork

Participants in the study felt that learning in a team would contribute to sharing good practices. They said teamwork made the learning interesting and enjoyable. In their view teamwork would relieve the isolation and build a strong relationship between the participants both during the training period and after. Teamwork was also in line with learner-centred education, the philosophy underpinning the Namibian education system. Participants felt that when working in a team one learned to share ideas with colleagues and in so doing enrich one's own experience. The participants particularly singled out the support they got from friends as critical in working as a team.

Principal A said:

I like working in a team because one learns a lot from others. I believe management development programmes make provision for principal to work in groups so that we can share ideas on how to manage schools. I will definitely support the idea for team or group work.

Principal D maintained:

Perhaps teamwork or group work for me is the best when it comes to training for principals. It is good because one learns better when you share ideas with other principals. You see one feels secure in working with others because you know they can correct you when you go wrong.

Principal E claimed that:

Our education system is based on learner-centred education and I know that teamwork is better than working individually. In a team one is supported by colleagues and it makes you feel good even if you are not clever because you draw strength from other participants.

4.5. Perceived needs of school principals

This category covers responses that emerged from the question on the management development needs of the principals. Principals were asked to list their needs that could be addressed through management development. This is one of the key questions as it relates directly to the research question, which is the *principals' perception and experience of management development needs*. The responses on this particular question generally suggest that there are many areas in which principals require support to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Although respondents presented a long list of needs, many of the needs were related and could be merged into one category. The following needs were dominant in all the responses: managing change, managing resources, policy

interpretation and implementation, school marketing and information communication technology.

4.5.1 Skills to manage change

Managing change was regarded as one of the biggest problem areas in educational management at school level. Principals and inspectors interviewed agreed that there were too many changes taking place in the Namibian education system. They were concerned that the training they received did not prepare them to manage change and as result many of them felt out of place and overwhelmed by the changes. They said a lack of skills made it very difficult for them to cope with the situation leading to a feeling of frustration.

Principal A said:

Things are changing every day in our system and we need to know how to manage change or the changing system. Look for example we have ETSIP and the National standards and there are many programmes coming, how do you go about it?

Principal E was of the opinion that:

The changes that are taking place require new skills; otherwise some of us may not cope and be declared redundant. The curriculum has changed and almost everything is changing. Now what do you do? Even if you try hard you can not, one needs special training to do that. My training did not prepare me for this”.

Inspector M did not mince words when it came to changes taking place in the education system. He said:

Definitely my principals are struggling to cope with the pace change is taking place in our system and that put pressure on me to intervene all

the time. I know that some of them do not have the skills to manage change and as a result they run to the office for every little thing

One of the principals singled out the issue of the new policies were being implemented.. In her view some of the policies were causing a problem in terms of implementation and even interpretation. She said: "...even circulars, we receive them almost every day, but how to put them into practice we don't know. We read them but then what do you do. But if every new policy when it comes in the system the inspector can help to explain to us. I some times go to personnel because there are too many of these policies coming almost every day" (Principal D).

The issue of changing policies seems to present a particular problem to most of the principal interviewed. Another principal echoed the concern and said:

When it comes to policy implementation I have noticed that a lot of policies are being misinterpreted and it leads to a problem. For example when it comes to the suspension of learners, you will find that this school learner are suspended for almost a month and at that school only two weeks

4.5.2 Skills to manage resources

This is one of the overriding needs among the principals I interviewed. Although they listed all kinds of needs under this category, they all fall in one main sub category which is the managing of resources. These include the management of human, financial and material resources. The majority of the principals and inspectors interviewed identified the need for training in financial management, particularly the School Development Fund (SDF) as their priority in terms of training. Staff development also came under spotlight as principals felt there was a need to train them in this area to help teachers cope with their work. They specifically referred to the new teachers joining the teaching profession. On the need for training in financial management, principal B said:

Financial management is very important because the SDF has to be used in such a way that satisfies the parents and also to care for the needs of the school. So many of us did not do accounting at school or tertiary level, we need this information, it is therefore important that we are trained in this area

Principal E said:

Financial management is crucial to me because I did not receive any training on how to handle SDF. I have seen many principals getting into trouble not because they squandered money, but because they did not have the know-how to handle it. We all want to do the right thing and I do not want to lose my job due to a lack of knowledge. If I am trained I will do the right thing

This need was also identified by inspector M who felt that SDF is too important to be left in the hands of principals without any training in financial management. According to him parents entrust these responsibilities to the principal imagining that they have the capacity to manage. He supported the views of the principals as he stressed:

There have been complaints about mismanagement of SDF in my circuit by school principals. I therefore see it as a training area for my principals. Parents expect to see that the money they pay is managed properly and benefit their children

On the other hand principals interviewed also expressed the need for training in human resource management. Their responses indicated that the need for training in the management of people ranked very high on the list. There was a general feeling that the training only prepared them to teach and not to manage other people. According to them schools are about people and they are interacting with teachers, learners and parents on a daily basis.

Principal A said:

The management of human resources is very important. It is people who do the work and I do not know any teaching course where they teach you on how to manage people, they just teach you how to teach. At this level I definitely need that type of training to help my colleagues as well as learners and parents

Principal D is in agreement:

I would need training in human resources management, because leading a school is about leading people. Every day I deal with people and some time I find it very difficult and a big challenge for me to make them work to best of their abilities. In my school teachers are divided into two camps and that affects the teaching and learning situation.

Principal E said:

Where there are people there always problems or conflicts and I did not get training in this area at the college of education. I will be happy to receive training in human resources management. I want to see my teachers work as a team and be able to help one another

Human resources management was also singled out by the two inspectors as an area where principals needed urgent support. They felt that principals spent most of their time interacting with people and it was important that they had the skills to direct and lead them. The inspectors saw human resources management as central to realizing the vision of a school. They felt that if teachers and learners were properly managed, they would support the vision of the school management team.

Inspector Z affirmed:

I would like to see my principals trained in the following areas: number one in human resources management, this is a critical area because

currently many principals do not know how to manage staff to ensure productivity. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that the staff supports their vision and at the moment they lack that skill

According to the principals I interviewed human resources management also covered the area of staff development. Principals generally felt that staff development was a key area of training particularly when it came to supporting teachers in their professional responsibilities.

Principal A confirmed:

To me human resources should include staff development because I want to see my teachers growing professionally so that they do the right thing. I do not need to supervise them all the time, which is why I need to train them first to know their responsibilities. I can only do that if I have the skills

Principal C said:

Staff development for me is very important aspect because there too many teachers at my school. They still depend on me and the heads of department to guide them on how to go about their teaching. It will be a good idea if we as principal are prepared on how to support our teachers.

Documents analysis on the responsibilities of the school principals indicates that “in-service development, inspection and guidance of staff members” are the core tasks of principals. (Namibia. MoE vacancy list Circular S.4/2 of 2007)

The Principals Manual (2005) also states that staff development is a key responsibility of a school principal.

4.5.3 School Development Plan

School development planning has become a very important concept in the Namibian education system. All schools are expected to have school development plans indicating the development of the school over a period of time. Principals are required to lead the process of developing these plans in conjunction with the school community. Principals interviewed expressed the need to be trained in school development planning. According to them school development planning is central to the growth of the school. As a new requirement for schools many principals found it difficult to mobilize the community in order to develop such a plan.

Principal C said: “School development planning in my case is very important aspect of any planning and I would like to be empowered in this area. You see we are expected to have SDP to show how the school is developing in five years. I always struggle to put ideas together or even to lead the community”.

When probed to explain why she thought training in school development planning was important, Principal C said: “You know every time the inspector comes to our school the first thing he looks at is SDP. I believe SDP will bring about change and development in our schools. So it is important to get training on how to develop the plan”.

Inspector Z believes SDP could turn schools into centres of education excellence. In his view the development and the successful implementation of SDP depends on the abilities and commitment of the school principal. He said:

School development planning is the way to go if we want our schools to become centres of education excellence. We have tried many things in this country, but I think SDP could bring about improvement and principals play a vital role in the development of the plan.

4.5.4 Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Principals who participated in the study saw skills in ICT as one of the most important assets of a principal in the twenty-first century. The introduction of ICT in many schools poses a serious challenge to school principal as they lacked the skills to operate these newly acquired facilities. The principals said that ICT was becoming so important that they felt left behind as most of the teachers trained at colleges had the basic skills in computers. They added that the lack of computer skills was hampering the smooth communication within the circuit and across the region.

Principal B said:

ICT is very important because we are living in a fast-changing world, a world of technology. Schools even in the rural areas are introduced to the use of computers. I can not continue to rely on my secretary to search for information and send private messages for me. It is even embarrassing that my teachers are far better than myself

Principal C added:

ICT is extremely important, as a principal I need to have a computer in my office to file all my documents and information about my teachers. At the moment I use the manual filing system and who knows mice can come and destroy it any time

Principal E saw ICT as more important today than any other skill. She said:

To me ICT will be first, because when I was appointed as a principal I had some skills on how to manage a school, but when it comes to ICT it is a big problem. There are times that we are required to search something on the internet, many of us do not know how to do it. That is why for me ICT is a priority for now.

Inspector Z agreed with the principals and he stated:

ICT especially the use of computers, if my principals are trained then they will access the internet if it is connected they might be linked to other schools having better management practices. They will also be able to explore and search for information to improve to improve their management skills. This area is very important.

4.6 Perceived support from supervisor or elsewhere

This category has been identified from the responses to a question aimed at establishing whether there were programmes in place to help the principals cope with their responsibilities. It should be noted that principals who participated in the study were conveniently selected on the basis of their experience. When interviewed, at least two of the most experienced principals indicated that they participated in the leadership programmes some years ago. Here the responses varied according to their experience in the position (see profiles of principals). Inspectors of education interviewed also confirmed that there were programmes in the past, but they were no longer operational.

On the support from her supervisor, Principal B responded:

To be honest we are not really receiving any kind of support that can offer development to us. The only support we receive is perhaps through meetings organized by the inspector to share information and take decision on certain matters. I do not remember any other support in the form of development or induction.

Principal D agreed:

Actually the support from the regional office or supervisor is mainly meetings I used to attend and sometimes a one day workshop for example on statistics, but I never received any training even induction course since I was appointed in this position.

Principal A also said:

Most of the time when we demand for professional development the answer is always very simple, “there is no fund available to carry out that type of activities”. The last time I received professional development was in 1997 and since then I can not recall any form of professional development organized for principals. It is now ten years ago and things have changed.

Asked to explain what this program was all about, he said: “It was a four day leadership training workshop conducted by the Otjikondo village foundation under the auspices of the Regional Office of Education. The workshop was based on leadership and management skills, but as I said that was ten years ago.”

On the leadership programme principal C stated: “I attended a course some years back for almost four years. The course was conducted in many different regions and was about leadership. We were taken to the best schools outside the region where we went to observe how things were done by other experienced principals. We learnt how to motivate our teachers, general administration, problem solving. It was a very good course and I also learnt that parents are the school’s best friends.”

Inspectors of education responded that they did provide support, but could not confirm or produce any evidence to substantiate their claims. Inspector M said:

Well I can say that we support principals in a way to develop professionally, for example last year and this year my principals were trained in human resources management. We want them to know how to deal with teachers, learners and even parents. But I must say it was very short

Inspector Z remarked:

We are giving them support through the Teachers Resources Centre and currently there are training programmes under way for principals in management and ICT. You see the budget does not allow us to cover a lot in terms of management and leadership, but we are trying our level best”

On the leadership program inspector M indicated that there were a few programmes in the past to develop principal professionally. He said: “What I can remember is the Otjikondo Village Foundation under the leadership of Mr. Solomon who conducted a series of leadership courses for principals. They covered a lot in training, maybe we as supervisors did not do proper follow-up after the training to assess the impact”

Inspector M also revealed that he was part of the team that developed materials for the professional development modules aimed at helping principals in the day- o-day running of their schools. He reported: “We developed a lot of materials on how to manage human resources, how to manage finances, how to conduct class visits etc. A lot of documents were developed and I think these initiatives also were abandoned due to budgetary constraints, but otherwise it was a good programme.”

4.7 Personal development

This category gives us the picture of initiatives undertaken by individual principals to upgrade themselves in the absence of the support from their supervisor and elsewhere. It became clear from the respondents especially those appointed in recent years that there was little support forthcoming in terms of management development. They indicated that the only way to keep abreast with current developments in the field was by seeking opportunities elsewhere. The general feeling among the respondents was that there were few opportunities offered by Namibian institutions. For example there was no other Namibian institution except the University of Namibia that offered a leadership and management programme. They also said that the majority of the courses were offered by

South African institutions. More than half of the respondents indicated that they were engaged in part-time studies.

Principal B said: “On my own I have registered for a course in general administration to upgrade myself. I know this course will help me to have a better understanding of administrative issues. I cannot wait for the government I know they always say there is no money, so I have taken the initiative”. Principal D responded: “I am trying on my own as you can see I have just finished my Further Diploma in Education Management and will continue with BEd in the same area of specialization.

The inspectors of education interviewed indicated that they were aware of principals doing courses in management as a means to self development. Generally they were positive about these developments and said they would continue to encourage their principals to seek self improvement elsewhere and not always wait for the government to provide these initiatives.. Inspector Z said: “Despite the lack of funds from our part, I know that some principals in my circuit are enrolled with institutions of higher learning to do courses in management. I am also aware that these courses are not accessible to all principals and at times very expensive. But it is better than just waiting from the government”

4.8 Readiness

This category provides an indication of whether the participants would be willing to participate in management development programmes initiated by the Ministry of Education through their supervisor. Generally the respondents appeared to be eager to participate in these programs. In their view these were the developments they were waiting for. They also argued that the absence of management programs and induction courses is a contributing factor to poor performance of many schools. They said that they wanted to move with the times and therefore welcomed any initiative that would help them to expand their knowledge in education management and leadership.

Principal A said: “Management development or training is something I have been waiting for a long time in this region. I know that other regions have programmes to help principals. For sure if this opportunity comes my way I will grab it with both hands.”

Principal E supported the above view and stressed that principals have been thrown in the deep end without any support and felt that she would participate if such an opportunity were given to her. She also implored the researcher to ensure that the findings of the study were made available to the policy makers so that action would be taken immediately to address the situation of the principals. She said:

I hope the findings will reach the officials concerned in the Ministry of Education so that they can see the problems we are experiencing as managers of schools. For them to know that we are operating under very difficult circumstances even though the expectations are so high.

4.9 Areas of responsibilities

This category though not necessarily part of the answer to the research question has been added to provide a background to what principals perceive to be their main areas of responsibility. It links in with the question on the need for management development. It is the extent of their responsibilities that ultimately determines whether there was a need for management development for a school principal or not. Respondents were asked to list their major responsibilities as principals of schools and the following areas were identified:

“To manage and administer the school in all areas. To lead staff under me” (Principal E).

“The main one is overall supervision, starting from Heads of Department down to the learners in the classrooms. The other responsibility is to attend to the problems of the parents” (Principal B). “I think my major responsibility is to manage the school. when I talk of managing the school it includes managing human resources, managing the

facilities, managing the people” (Principal A).”I think my major responsibility is to supervise the school, to support teachers, to ensure that there is discipline in school and especially to ensure that the teaching and learning is taking place. I also teach because I am first and foremost a teacher” (Principal D).

Document analysis also indicates that principals have a number of responsibilities. The main ones are summarized in the Principals’ Manual (2005) and cover the following broad areas: Instructional leadership, management of resources, maintenance of discipline, staff development, to serve as a link and parents.

Undated job descriptions found in possession of every respondent outlined the “duties and responsibilities” as follows: accountability, which includes creating and implementing a School Development Plan, account for school’s performance, to advise and provide information to parents and School Board, promoting a positive school climate, creating an effective learning environment, leading and managing staff etc. this is a summarized version of the job description as the complete document covers up to six pages describing each core responsibility in detail. Reading through both the Principals’ Manual and the job descriptions I detected a lot of overlapping and duplications which could cause confusion to principals who are expected to carry out these responsibilities. The Vacancy List Circular S.4/2 of 2007 where principal positions are advertised gives the key areas of responsibilities of school principals as follows: “implementation and evaluation of teaching programmes, teaching, supervision and management of the school, in-service development, inspection and guidance of staff members at school.

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the data according to the categories and sub categories that emerged from the responses of the participants in the study and the document analysis. The voices captured are mainly of the respondents with no comments from my part. My role was merely to arrange the responses into categories and sub categories. It must be

said that the process of identifying categories from responses was not that smooth as there were repetitions and at time contradictions and some respondents spoke at length when asked to explain an issue.

The main thrust of the study was to give the respondents the opportunity to give their *perceptions and experience* on the matter. Note that the categories were arrived at by taking into consideration the research question. In the next chapter these categories are condensed into main themes that provide the basis for the discussion of the data. The following themes have been identified: empowerment and capacity building, improved communication, experiential learning, managing change, managing of resources.

Chapter FIVE

Discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented data consisting of the responses of the participants together with information gleaned from the document analysis. The goal of my study was to understand the perception and experience of principals of their management development needs. It was therefore important that I allowed the participants' views to be heard in the presentation without any comment that could interfere with the authenticity of the data.

The presentation of data gave me the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the participants' responses in relation to the research question as I viewed the data through the lenses of the participants. This process also served the purpose of identifying major issues and patterns that emerged from the data. From the data presentation it became clear that there were overlapping views and commonalities in the responses of the participants to different questions. This chapter therefore attempts to further analyze the data and make sense out of them. In the discussion of the data, the relevant literature discussed in chapter 2 comes into play to inform the arguments and responses of the participants. It is however, the major themes from the data and the research question that guide the discussion. The following themes form the basis of the discussion: empowerment and capacity building, improved communication, experiential learning, managing change and managing resources and monitoring and support.

5.2 Empowerment and capacity building

The notion of empowerment and capacity building in relation to management development features prominently in my findings. It cuts across all the themes that emerged from the interviews and document analysis. Participants in the study generally perceived management development as a way to build capacity and empower school leaders to perform their tasks more effectively. Although the respondents used different words and different phrases to refer to empowerment and capacity building, in essence their views generally point to the same thing. For example one of the respondents saw management development as a way to make a principal more effective. According to her management development could be a tool to equip her with management skills and “empower me to manage my school effectively”. This line of thinking about management development was also supported by one of the inspectors who held the view that management development had the potential to build capacity amongst his principals. The participants in the study felt that their duties and responsibilities required some kind of support in the form of management development to build capacity and empower them.

The definitions of management development discussed in chapter 2 support the view expressed by the respondents. Many scholars and researchers equate management development in the context of educational leadership and management to empowerment and capacity building. Leithwood et al. (1994, p. 148) for example saw management development as “those processes by which an individual selectively acquires the skills and dispositions needed to perform effectively the role of a school leader. Such processes may range from carefully planned programmes...” Bolam (2003) in support of this view of leadership development provided the following definition:

leadership development is an ongoing process of education, training, learning and support activities primarily engaged in by qualified, professional headteachers and other school leaders so that they can promote high quality education for their students more effectively and thus achieve an agreed balance between individual, school and national needs (p. 75).

These definitions clearly suggest that management development programmes are a way of helping principals cope with their responsibilities. The data show that principals are responsible for a number of management and leadership activities. The respondents for example mentioned staff development, school development plans, management of discipline, public relations, budgeting and management of curriculum as some of the activities that they perform. Glasman (1995) suggested that principals require some form of empowerment to effectively carry out these responsibilities. In his study of empowered principals, Glasman (1995) identified at least seven domains or areas of responsibilities and they are:

- Administration of curriculum and instruction
- Administration of staff personnel
- Administration of student personnel
- Administration of buildings and facilities
- Administration of school finances
- Administration of business support
- Administration of school community relations activities (p. 21).

Some of the domains correspond with the responsibilities mentioned by the respondents in the study. In his book entitled “The Empowered Manager”, Block (1987) argued that to feel empowered means different things to different people. In his view, it is only when people take full responsibility of their own situation that they feel empowered. This includes knowing what to do and when to do it and how to do it. The findings in this study suggest that the respondents, according to this definition, are not empowered. They complained that they were not in a position to effectively and confidently carry out staff development and embark upon school improvement programmes. One of them said: “I don’t know how to do it, but I am trying”. These remarks in my view suggest that principals are not adequately empowered to confidently deal with those tasks outlined above.

The issue of a school development plan or improvement programme in relation to the professional development of school leaders, featured prominently in the data. In recent

years school effectiveness and school improvement have become subjects of intense debate and research (Gronn, 1997; Bezzina, 2001; Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Huber, 2004). These authors viewed school effectiveness as highly correlated with the capacities of school leaders and suggest that management development would be the key to addressing these issues. Cardno & Fitzgerald. (2005, p. 292) for example noted that “professional development should be a critical concern of leaders in the field of educational administration, management and leadership, it has been impacted on by both evolutionary and revolutionary forces. This is what she termed a “quiet revolution”. This view is echoed by Huber (2004) who observed that “studies on school development and improvement also emphasize the importance of school leaders, especially in the view of continuous improvement process.”

The preceding discussion demonstrates what the respondents had in mind when they referred to management development as a tool for empowerment and capacity building. The discussion recognized the important role principals play in bringing about change and improvement at school. Gronn (1997) refer to education reform and school improvement as “organizational transformation”. He suggested that effective organisations should “identify those with potential and nurture them as tenaciously and carefully as they would nature any other precious resource critical to success” (p. 274).

The idea of principals supporting teachers in the form of staff development emerged strongly in the data. Respondents felt that management development would equip them for this critical task. Documents perused for this study list staff development as the primary task of the principal and a key element in school improvement initiatives. Glasman (1995) used the terms “empowered and empowering” to refer to principals who are supported by their supervisor in the form of leadership development and who in return provide staff development to their teachers. Roe and Drake (1980, p. 262) argued: “No matter how the staff is organized, a major responsibility of the principal is to help faculty and staff grow into an enthusiastic, inspired, hardworking dynamic team. Unfortunately this is a difficult task.” This quote about staff development though not current, in my view captures the essence of staff development. The quote places the

responsibility of professional development of teachers on the shoulders of the principal. It is therefore logical to argue as the data suggests, that principals need to be empowered in order to facilitate professional development for their staff. Starratt (1996) used the term “empowerment” extensively to argue in favour of staff development for teachers. According to Starratt (1996, p. 110) “empowerment as a policy, then, is a commitment that the school environment will continually nurture teachers’ growth in their abilities to promote the growth of students, both through their own modeling of what it means to be an authentic person and through their engagement with the students and the learning material itself.” Empowering principals thus means “killing two birds with one stone.” Empowerment as per Starratt’s explication is not the luxury of school leaders alone, but is extended to staff members, learners and the community at large. This in my view forms the basis of school improvement and development, where every individual feels empowered to make a meaningful contribution.

The findings of the study conducted by Udjombala (2006) on the Leadership Development Programme for school leaders in Namibia revealed that the program “helped them to experience personal changes and to grow and develop professionally” (p. 107). This is in line with the perceptions of principals about management development. They perceived management development as something that would bring about change in their professional life. Principals who participated in the study felt that management development not only built capacity, but also promoted confidence in school leadership. Management development is perceived to create a sense of security as principals would work confidently knowing that they were on top of issues. Kawana (2004) in her investigation of women leadership in Namibia also hinted at the issue of capacity building and found that “new principals- including female principals were involved in continuous professional development programmes, which was aimed at equipping new principals with knowledge and skills on school management and administration” (p. 70). In fact most of the participants in my study who indicated that they were enrolled with institutions of higher learning in leadership and management courses were women. This revealed an interesting phenomenon in the Namibian education system though the scope and focus of this study did not allow me to pursue it.

Capacity building for educational leaders is one of the key objectives of the Education and Training Sector Improvement program (ETSIP) in Namibia. The lack of capacity has been identified as a one of the biggest challenge in the implementation of educational programmes in schools. Provisions have been made in ETSIP to address capacity at all levels. ETSIP (Namibia. ETSIP, 2006, p. 81) states:

The Ministry of Education is the lead agency in the education sector. It requires strong capacity to lead the sector to deliver ongoing, routine education services to the public. Capacity is strongly related to productivity: high capacity in the Ministry will directly increase its productivity, its ability to lead the sector and achieve more with whatever resources it has.

The thinking behind this quote reflects the general feelings of the participants in the study. Although ETSIP is referring to the sector as whole, the real teaching and learning activities take place at school level. ETSIP acknowledges this fact: “School academic performance is highly correlated with the abilities of the school managers. At present, opportunities for professional development of managers are insufficient” (Namibia. ETSIP, 2006, p. 81). The government of the Republic of Namibia and the Ministry of Education in particular, views empowerment and capacity building for education leaders as a way to transform the education system. It is perceived as a way to address the remnants and legacy of the apartheid system that continues to haunt many educational institutions.

Yukl (2002, p. 266) added his voice to the discussion about empowerment and argued that “an essential part of transformational leadership is to empower people to achieve the vision”. In his view empowerment exists to help and support subordinates who assume responsibilities for resolving problems on their own and reducing bureaucratic constraints so that people have more discretion to operate as individuals. He further argued that empowerment goes hand in glove with the provision of adequate resources and opportunities for subordinates to carry out a task for which they are being held accountable.

The job description of the principals in the study outlines their duties and responsibilities. Some of the responsibilities include developing the School Development Plan that articulates the vision and mission of the school, staff development and guiding teachers, managing the school in all respects. The *Guidelines for School Principals* also outlines a host of responsibilities on top of these. The findings revealed that there is very little support to “help and support” managers as Yukl suggested above. In the words of one of the respondents: “To be honest we are not receiving any kind of support that can offer development”. The only support they received according to Principal D is “mainly meetings to share information”. In the study on effective management of schools, Kantema (2001) found that some principals in the Kavango region were not even aware of the existence of the *Guidelines for School Principals*. This confirmed the perceptions of principals in the study.

5.3. Improved communication

Communication in the context of management development emerged as a strong theme in my findings. Principals in the study perceived management development as a vehicle to improved communication with their staff members, parents and the larger community and believed that it could lead to a better learning and teaching atmosphere. They believed that management development had the potential to promote confidence and a culture of lifelong learning. In so doing communication with other principals and schools could be improved. Lee (2002) acknowledged the importance of learning relationships in what he termed “networking”. The data suggest that if communication is strengthened as a result of professional development it could expand principals’ horizons. Yukl (2002) used the term “building professional relationships” to recognize the importance of communication in leadership development. This thinking is in line with what the data suggest in this study. Communication in this context is extended to the implementation of the school clustering system, the capacity to network with other principals and institutions within a given region and beyond, and setting up exchange and twinning arrangements. The

findings revealed that improved communication among school leaders with their stakeholders created an inviting climate in schools. In the participants' views an inviting atmosphere encouraged parents to get involved with their children's schooling and make meaningful a contribution to the development of education.

The need for communication came out strongly in their responses to the question on why they thought management development was important. One of the respondents for example was of the opinion that "management development or training will help me to communicate and share experiences with other principals. We are so isolated even within the cluster we do not interact. I want to learn from others". Clearly communication here is more than just "talking to someone", it is equated to sharing and caring for others, which is a foundation of many African cultures. Seemingly, improved communication could pave a way for interaction and most importantly to learn from one another. Principal D saw management development as a unifying tool as they will "open up' and "unite to speak with one voice".

In this context improved communication that came with management development is perceived by respondents to have a sort of emancipative or liberating function of the mind. The findings of the study by Kaura (2004) on the role of communication in management and leadership in education are in line with the views expressed by the participants in my study. Her findings suggested:

It is through communication that democratic practice is achieved as a vehicle for involvement in decision-making, sharing, teamwork, and a medium for leadership leading to empowerment, human development, bringing about change through the sharing of vision (Kaura, 2004, p. iii).

The idea of sharing was of particular importance in my findings. Many of the respondents were nurtured in the African culture where sharing and caring for others is the norm (at least in the past). Sharing is the glue that holds people and communities together and is almost a way of life. Sharing is the cornerstone of the Ubuntu ideology. The Ubuntu philosophy is built on the assumption that "a person is a person through other persons".

In the education management set up where resources are scarce, sharing is critical as it breaks competition and encourages teamwork. Sharing not only involves resources but also experience and knowledge. In fact this is a high level of sharing as it requires empathy from the parties involved. Sharing expertise in this context is viewed as a two way process, a reciprocal kind of sharing. In strengthening the views expressed above in relation to the significance of communication in education, Lunenburg and Ornstein (1991, p. 185) contended:

Communication, the lifeblood of every school organization, is a process that links the individual, the group, and the organization. To be sure communication mediates inputs to the organization from the environment and outputs from the organization to the environment. The administrator of today's school organization has a multifaceted job, which includes setting objectives, organization tasks, motivating employees, reviewing results and making decisions.

According to this view, school leaders cannot accomplish the required responsibilities without adequate communication. It therefore goes without saying that management development is the starting point of effective and improved communication.

5.3.1 The school cluster system

In Namibia, the cluster system was introduced *inter alia* to improve communication among schools. The school cluster system is relevant to this discussion as it narrows the gap in terms of communication between schools and the Regional Office. The cluster system features strongly in the responses of the participants of my study. The findings of my study indicate that principals in Namibia are expected to work with their counterparts in the cluster system. *The Principals' Manual* (2005) which outlines the responsibilities of the principals indicates that the cluster centres should be used to share experiences and skills, as well as to provide a framework for in-service training. My findings reveal that the cluster system is utilized by principals to share experiences and at the same time inspectors of education use it to disseminate information to school. One of the cluster center principals interviewed confirmed that principals met on a regular basis. A program

of activities was available at the centre. As a management strategy, the cluster system also aims to build capacity and empower principals to take full responsibility for all activities at their schools. Dittmar et al. (2002, p. 38) point out that the main benefit of the system is:

The elimination of many problems due to schools being small and isolated. All teachers and principals will be able to meet readily to share their ideas, problems, solutions and experiences. This kind of contact is mutually stimulating.

Although the cluster system is well established in the Kavango region, there are a number of areas which need improvement. The lack of meeting venues, photocopying facilities and transport were singled out by the participants in the study as some of the stumbling blocks to the successful implementation of the system. Topnaar (2004) also found that the cluster system had bridged the gap and enhanced uniformity and cooperation. This study further revealed that sharing of ideas on educational issues and constant interaction created a conducive atmosphere for academic performance. What is important here is the role the cluster system plays in improving communication among principals and schools, which ultimately leads to better performance. Principals who were previously isolated are brought closer and kept abreast with the latest developments in the field of education. In the process they grow personally and professionally. ETSIP (2006) acknowledges the importance of the cluster system in the restructuring of the education system. ETSIP suggests that the cluster centers will be strengthened and upgraded to play a more meaningful role as in-service training centres for teachers and principals.

The aspect of networking in the context of communication also came out strongly in my findings. Principals in the study felt that management development could open up opportunities for them to establish networks with other principals in other regions, especially principals of schools with a good performance track record. Task Team Report (1996) deals with “networking, partnerships communication” at length and confirms the views expressed by my respondents in this study. Task Team Report (1996, p. 51) suggested that “a strongly woven web of vibrant networks and partnerships has the

breadth and depth to nurture, drive and sustain the management of change.” This line of thinking was also supported by one of the inspectors, who believed that his principals could be encouraged to network with other principals outside the region and learn “good practices on how to manage schools” In his view networking would benefit his principals a great deal and breathe new ways of thinking in his circuit.

Calitz et al. (2004, p. 25) concur with this view and claimed that “school practitioners need to network with other schools, form partnership, and locate outside expertise and assistance”. Generally the findings indicated an enthusiasm and keen interest on the part of the principals wanting to learn from their counterparts outside the region and beyond. The use of ICT was viewed as one of the ways to network in order to cut down costs on transport. Networking could only be possible if principals were empowered and had the confidence to interact with other principals and seek assistance. Self-awareness and reflective practice are pre-requisites to encourage principals to network, once there was the realization by individual principals that they lacked information or capacity in a certain area of management.

The idea of networking also found support in Daresh and Playko (1992, p. 161) who recognized networking as a form of in-service training. In their view this approach involved linking individuals in different schools or districts for the purpose of sharing concerns and effective practices on an ongoing basis. They further advised that in networking the primary responsibility for controlling the learning experience lay directly with the participants. The advantage of networking, according to this view is that individuals who share common problems come together on a regular basis to gain support from colleagues and also gain additional insights from others who face similar problems.

In networking the participants interact on the same level in an informal way. This is in line with what the participants in the study articulated. Networking is built on mutual respect with great emphasis on a learner-learner relationship as opposed to a teacher-learner. The assumption as far as networking is concerned is that of mutual benefit. Similarly, respondents in my study viewed exchange programmes as vital in expanding

their management skills. One of the respondents for example indicated that she initiated an exchange program with a principal in another region. She also said that she was planning to have similar arrangement with a school in Holland. A study conducted in Singapore, (Lee, 2002) found that networking or learning relationships benefited principals who participated in the management development programmes. The above findings resonate with the perceptions of the respondents in the study.

Another issue that featured in the findings was that of lifelong learning. The respondents felt that the sharing of experiences through networking and the clustering activities could promote a culture of lifelong learning. In their views the valuable experience obtained from their counterparts could trigger the need and interest to explore more, particularly in the area of educational management and leadership. One of the respondents felt that the exposure and experience gained could turn “my school into a learning centre”. This principal is not a lone voice. The Presidential Commission Report in Namibia (1999, p. 32) supports this claim and points out that:

A school would therefore not just busy itself with the learning of its enrolled children. The school will also make its facilities for literacy and open learning programmes for adults. It will run programmes to ensure that parents understand exactly how they can support the learning of their children in various ways. Many schools will be learning centres with a coordinator who sets up study groups and cultural activities, gives access to library and information services and gives advises about other learning opportunities. The staff of the school will be an example to the community through their continuous engagement in learning to update their subject knowledge and teaching skills.

The findings suggest that schools could be transformed into centres of learning activities and a culture of learning could be cultivated among the learners and the entire community. Bennis and Nanus (in Fullan, 1992, p. 19) supported this view:

The ultimate safeguard against empowered managers going too far off track is that they are perpetual learners. When it comes to learning, effective leaders are greedy. Learning is the essential fuel for the leader, the source of high-octane energy that keeps up momentum by

continually sparking new understanding, new ideas, and new challenges. It is absolutely indispensable under today's conditions of rapid change and complexity. Very simply, those who do not learn do not long survive as leaders.

5.4 Experiential learning

This theme too, emerged in the findings of this study. Participants used words and phrases like “learning while employed”, “on the job”, “in-service”, “mixed theory and practice” to refer to the learning approach they perceived to be appropriate for management development. Generally, the respondents felt that they would prefer to participate in the programme that offered them the opportunity to learn while working. In their view this way of learning was more “effective as one learns things one does”. This resonates with what Kolb (1984) calls “experiential learning”. According to Kolb (1984, p. 3):

The experiential learning model pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work and personal development. It offers a system of competencies for describing job demands and corresponding educational objectives and emphasizes the critical linkages that can be developed between the classroom and the real world.

Learning on the job according to this view has a powerful effect, because participants learn things that are relevant to their experience. It is a hands-on approach to learning and emphasizes the importance of context. Bolam (2004, p. 84) supported the views expressed by the respondents and stated:

Given the unavoidably contingent and unpredictable nature of their work, effective leaders and managers must necessarily, therefore adopt strategies and methods consistent with their own knowledge and skills, and appropriate to their particular organizations, tasks, staff and context.

The practical consequence is that they must learn and use repertoire of style and techniques and exercise informed professional judgement to operate effectively within the constraints and opportunities of their unique situation.

A study conducted in the USA (Restine, 1997, p. 265) on how principals viewed experience in professional development established that: “experience had a major influence on learning and development”. The study further concluded that learning and development are social processes. Developing skills, understanding, and forming a sense of competence require an element of community. Skills are not imparted in a structured or formal manner but learned and appreciated within the community of other practitioners. Bezzina (2001) reports on a management development programme in Malta that used the experiential learning model. Bezzina (2001, p. 142) confirmed that “the programme is organized around what educational leaders need to know and be able to do.”

Other concepts and approaches which featured in the findings besides experiential learning were self-awareness, networking, teamwork, mentoring and peer coaching. Self-awareness in particular, was significant in the responses of the participants. Self-awareness was evident in the way they articulated their perceived needs and the situation around them. The data suggest that most of the respondents were involved in studies to upgrade themselves. In my view this came about as a result of self-awareness. The idea of self-awareness finds support in Yukl (2002, p. 197) who argued that “self-awareness makes it easier to understand one’s own needs and do something about it”. Daresh and Playko (1992) recognize the importance of self-awareness and used the term “personal and professional formation”. In their view, personal and professional formation was the process through which an individual becomes more aware of his own personal values and assumptions regarding the formal role of a school principal. Daresh and Playko (1992, p. 55) argued that formation is a way in which “individuals may come to understand themselves more completely.”

Self-awareness in the context of management development is important as it requires that individuals assess themselves and recognize the need for development.

5.5 Managing change

“The ability to create and manage the future in the way that we wish, is what differentiates the good manager from the bad” Harvey-Jones

Managing change, as one of the key skills required by school leaders featured prominently in my findings. When my respondents were asked to list what they considered to be their crucial needs, the majority singled out managing change as a challenge to their management and leadership careers. They referred to the changes in the curriculum, policies, change in the environment, deployment of teachers (staffing norms), and of course what most of them referred to as “the new demand”, Information Communication Technology (ICT). Fullan (1992, p. 19) supported the views expressed above and argued that “the endless supply of new policies, programmes and procedures ensures that the dilemma remains active. The idea that heads should be the leaders in the implementation of changes which they had no hand in developing and may not understand is especially troublesome.”

Boyle et al. (2002, p. 31) observed that “the turbulent environment confronting modern organizations has enhanced the need for a responsive and innovative workforce. One important means of achieving competitive advantage is the creation of conditions for the rapid acquisition of knowledge and skills”. A study conducted in Africa (Bush & Oduro, 2006) showed that school principals require training in financial and human resource management. These findings are in agreement with the findings in my study where principals singled out financial management, ICT and managing human resources among their top training needs.

The inspectors of education acknowledged that their principals were overwhelmed by the changes in education and that “new skills were needed to cope with these changes”. It also emerged in my findings that inspectors of education were in the same situation as their subordinates. “I would like to suggest that in future opportunities be made available to principals and also inspectors of education to have access to professional development in their jobs. Many countries are doing it where a person is prepared before they take up a new position at various level” one inspector claimed. Literature on managing change also supports the view that managers require new skills to manage and lead change as expressed by the respondents in this study. Everard et al. (2004, p. 237) argued:

In the past, most training has been aimed at helping managers to manage the status quo more efficiently, but as the environment becomes more turbulent so it becomes more important to develop their skills in coping with change and indeed steering it. Management of change is a key task of this time. The call for change may spring from outside the school or educational system or from within.

This claim suggests that for principals to cope with the ever-changing system as in the case of Namibia there is a need to equip them with the necessary skills. Evans maintained that change challenges people’s competence.

Alterations in practices, procedures and routines hamper people’s ability to perform their jobs confidently and successfully, making them feel inadequate and insecure especially if they have exercised their skills in a particular way for a long time. It shakes their confidence and makes them doubt their abilities, especially their ability to adapt to the new requirements (Evans, 1996, p. 34).

The respondents in my study are exactly in this situation as they feel threatened and overwhelmed by the changes. The consequences of such a situation leads to frustration among the managers as the findings indicated. Many schools in Namibia suffer as a result of leadership stagnation brought about by the lack of support in the form of management development. There is also evidence in the Task Team Report (1996) to support my findings. The Task Team Report (1996, p. 45) advised: “Individuals who are working in

an environment which is constantly changing require support”. Everard *et al.* (2004, p. 251) offered some examples of the skills needed to manage change:

- Analyzing large complex systems
- Goal-setting and planning
- Getting consensus decision
- Conflict management
- Public relations
- Consulting and counselling
- Training and teaching

Dull (cited in Van der Westhuizen, 2007) suggested that principals approach and learn from other principals who have undergone the same experience. This view is congruent with the ideas of sharing and networking discussed under communication. It also encourages principals to explore different ways and strategies to cope with change. It makes principals self-starters and initiators of ideas in addressing the situation at hand. Dependency syndrome is eliminated and this paves the way for creativity and autonomy; important qualities of a successful manager.

5.5.1 Implementation of policies

The implementation of policies came out strongly in my findings as one of the areas where principal needed support. My participants felt that many policies had been introduced in schools since independence and they (the participants in the study) who are the implementers of these policies were not well enough informed to handle them. Fullan (1992) recognized the need for building capacity among school leadership to be able to deal with the endless supply of new policies and directives. A change in policy created a sense of “insecurity”, “tension” and “frustration”. In the view of the participants there was a need to “inform us through a one day training workshop so that we are at the same level” when new polices were introduced. The misinterpretation of policies they said occurs because there is a lack of clear understanding. The views expressed by the respondents also find support in Cardno & Fitzgerald (2005) who argue that the changing

policy environment has a significant impact on school leadership. They argued that these changes have greatly altered and expanded the role of principals. Cardno & Fitzgerald (2005, p. 317) recommended that “professional support via training and development in both leadership and management areas will be require if principals are going to be able to continue to meet the challenges inherent in their day to day work.”

Since independence, the Ministry of education has introduced a number of policies and directives to address the legacies of the past. Principals are expected to lead and implement these changes. It is almost impossible for a policy to be implemented successfully if principals are not properly informed. One of the respondents referred to the “legal language” in which these policies are written. The respondents also complained about the curriculum reform under way now which they said has left them in the “darkness”. According to them the training only targets teachers and leaves them behind. “How are we supposed to supervise and monitor the implementation if we do not know?”

It is clear from these responses that principals need support to lead these changes. They need to be empowered as indicated in the earlier discussion to do their work with confidence. The study conducted on the effective management, Kantema (2001) found that principals are not properly “supported by the inspectors of education” to facilitate these changes. Kantema’s findings support the views of the respondents in my study.

5.5.2 Information Communication Technology (ICT)

The training in ICT especially the use of computers featured strongly in the findings as one of the urgent and critical needs in relation to managing change in education. All the respondents in my study including the inspectors of education regard ICT as a number one need that needed to be tackled. ICT is generally viewed as an issue in education that challenges the competencies of school leadership. They used words and phrases like “the new demand”, “new technology” and “information age” to refer to ICT. The respondents were of the opinion that the introduction of computers was a good thing, but

principals needed to be “trained to manage this new demand in technology and innovation”. In a survey conducted in Australia, Schiller (2003) found that most principals are aware of the importance of ICT in education and are attempting to do something about facilitating its use in their school. They said the use of computers especially the internet is “extremely important” as it opens doors for “communication and access to information”. “For me ICT will be first on my list. I cannot rely on my secretary to search and retrieve information for me all the time” remarked one of the principals. The respondents felt uncomfortable with the fact their new teachers from the colleges of education are equipped with computer skills. Hallinger (1998, p. 498) observed that “the diffusion of technology throughout society has made the ability to use technology, particularly in workplace, a necessity. Today, schools must bring technology into the classroom so that all children have the opportunity to learn how to use it at an early age.” This view corresponds with that of my respondents in the study who felt that capacity building in ICT would put them in a better position to facilitate and support the teachers and learners.

The Education and Training Sector Improvement program places a lot of emphasis on ICT and it is one of the priority areas receiving attention from both the government and the private sector. ETSIP (2006, p. 65) states: “Namibia recognizes the importance of ICT as a tool in the development of the country. ICT has a role to play in education both directly as a subject and indirectly as a tool to assist in educational delivery and management”. ETSIP further hints that the roles of the school leaders are of utmost importance in the implementation of ICT in schools. This line of thinking supports my findings as it puts the role of the principal at the centre of these changes. It is sad to note that the principals who are supposed to lead the campaign in the use of computers in school hardly know how to switch them on, let alone guide others in their use. The successful implementation and application of ICT will only be possible if the capacity exists among the principals and they are encouraged to integrate the use of computers in their daily management activities. These findings are supported by Lunenburg and Ornstein (1991) who held the view that the introduction of new technologies and

innovation should be done gradually taking into consideration the capacity and readiness of the school leadership.

The importance of ICT cannot be ignored in the context of educational management and leadership as the participants in the study indicated. Networking among principals is enabled if school leaders are equipped with ICT skills. One of the inspectors said that the use of computers could improve leadership and management capacity as “principals could be linked to share good management practices”. ICT skills among principals could open up opportunities for them to have access to international journals dealing with issues of educational management and leadership.

5.6 Managing resources

As with the management of change, this theme featured strongly in different forms in the responses from participants. The management of resources covered issues like financial resources (school development fund), human resources (people) as well as material resources. A critical area dealt with the managing of teachers who are directly responsible for the learning and teaching activities, which are the core business of a school. The question of staff development featured strongly. Anderson (2003) acknowledged the role of school principals in managing resources and argued that managers should feel confident in their role in order to carry out this important activity.

Generally, the respondents in my study felt that managing resources was a huge challenge. When asked to list their main responsibilities respondents mentioned the “overall supervision of all activities in school”, “management of the whole school”, “overall control of human, financial and material resources” as some of the key areas. *The Guidelines for School Principals* also indicates that principals are responsible for all aspects of management in the school. The aspect of managing resources is a major theme in this document. Hughes (cited in Bush, 2003, p. 85) suggested that principals had dual roles; they are both leading professionals (instructional leader) and chief executive officer

(coordinating resources). The findings in this study suggest that principals indeed play a dual role of being a manager and a leader at the same time.

5. 6.1 Managing people

Managing people as part of the school's resources emerged as a real area of concern where principals felt the need for training. My respondents indicated that a school involves dealing with people and working with people is no easy task. They said apart from the teachers and learners, there were also School Board members and parents that they had to deal with on a daily basis. Some of my respondents said that they found it difficult to motivate teachers to give of their best. Anderson (2003, p. 47) argued that people are the principal resource in any organisation and advised that managers and leaders need a good knowledge of planning, supervising, motivating, evaluating and rewarding staff.

Bush (2003, p. 3) confirmed the views expressed by my respondents and argued that “a potential problem is that individual and the organizational objectives may be incompatible, that organizational aims satisfy some but not all individual aspirations. It is reasonable to assume that most teachers want their school to pursue policies which are in harmony with their own interests and preferences.”

My findings revealed that school principals spend most of their time trying to motivate teachers and learners to perform. My respondents felt that the good performance of the teachers and learners was their prime responsibility. It is therefore important that they know how to provide instructional leadership to the staff to fulfill their mandate. The role of school principal in instructional leadership is widely acknowledged in literature and is in line with the thinking of the respondents in the study (Bush, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Sergiovanni 1992).

Instructional leadership implies supporting teachers to improve classroom practice. An instructional leader ensures that the teachers is always well prepared and well equipped in terms of the teaching methodology and materials before they enter their classrooms. Instructional leaders according to this view provide opportunities for professional development for teachers to grow personally and professionally and to learn to work as a team. This is in line with the responses of the participants in my study. They said that their main responsibilities were to “ensure that teaching and learning is taking place”, “to provide staff development” and “lead the staff and the School Board members”. Leithwood et al. (2004, p. 59) suggested that instructional leadership is “the catalyst for making schools smarter”. They argued that without good instructional leadership the potential of other important people and conditions in schools remain untapped. The concept of “others” refers to the key role players in education such as the learners, who are the primary beneficiaries of these efforts and of course, the parents.

The notion of “visionary leadership” also cropped up in the responses of the participants. The respondents used words like “vision”, “guiding” “motivating” and “inspiring.” In my view, this indicated that principals were referring to a different kind of leadership than just instructional leadership to successfully lead the school community to greater heights. Huen et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of transformational leadership in motivating teachers towards better performance. A transformational leader puts the interest of others above his own and consequently inspires and empowers the people around him to share his vision.

5.6.2 Financial management

Financial management was another area of concern where the participants in the study expressed a need professional development. All respondents including the inspectors of education were in agreement that the skill to manage a School Development Fund (SDF) was essential to the development of a school. Both the Guidelines for School Principals (2005) and the Education Act, 2001(Act, 16 of 2001) stipulate that the school principal

together with the School Board are the custodians of the SDF. Financial management is one of the key skills required by school leaders and is widely documented in literature dealing with management development (Glasman, 1995; Boyle et al., 2001; Bush & Oduro, 2006) This places a huge responsibility on the shoulders of school principals. My respondents indicated that they had little knowledge of financial management. One of the participants said: “Financial management for me is a priority, because the SDF has to be used in such a way to satisfy the parents and also to cater for the needs of the school “. Anderson (2003) acknowledged the importance of financial management and stressed that leaders and managers should be able to develop and manage budgets and accounting systems that reflect the core business of the organisation. This statement confirms the concerns of my respondents. The data indicate that the majority of the participants did not do financial management at the training college to prepare them for the task of managing school finances.

5. 7 Monitoring and support

The findings of the study show that there was a lack of support from the supervisors on various aspect of management. The newly appointed principals indicated that they were not even inducted. The issue of monitoring of existing initiatives emerged strongly from the data. Participants referred to a leadership programme that had been in use some years ago to build capacity among principals and heads of departments. According to them the programme came to a standstill because “there was no support from the office.” Madasi (2004, p. 74) advised that “constant support in the implementation of training programmes is fundamental.” Dadey and Harper (1991, p. 43) supported this view and were of the opinion that principals should be encouraged to take the initiative for their own development. They further stressed that resources and facilities should be provided for principals participating in the management development programmes. It is extremely important that principals are supported by their supervisors to develop professionally to ensure effective service delivery.

5. 8 Concluding remarks

Generally the picture that emerged from my findings resonates strongly with literature and also with findings produced by other researchers as reported in this chapter. The overall impression is that there is an urgent need for focused management development programmes in Namibia, and that principals need organised and structured support to cope with the pressures and demands of leading schools in the 21st century.

In the next chapter I discuss the implications of these findings and conclude the study.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present a summary of the main findings of the study, comment on its significance and limitations, and make some suggestions for future research. The aim of this study is to understand principals' perception and experience of their management development needs. The research question is phrased in such a way as to produce answers in respect of two issues that are critical to management development, i.e. the perceived benefits of management development and the management development needs of school principals.

6.2 Summary of the main findings

With regard to the perceived benefits of management development, my study found that school principals consider management development a means toward empowerment and capacity building.

Management development could also lead to improved communication among school principals as it gives them the confidence to network with other principals across the region and beyond. They could thus share their best practices and experiences in education management and leadership. Management development programmes could be facilitated via the cluster system.

Improved communication of this kind should help to create an inviting climate at schools for learning and teaching. Management development could contribute towards a culture

of lifelong learning among principals, teachers and the community at large. Importantly, principals preferred to learn from their own experience, i.e. to learn on the job, from the real situation, using hands-on methods that provide an opportunity for reflection.

As far as the management development needs of principals are concerned, the study found that principals require training in order to acquire skills to manage change and skills to manage resources.

The introduction of new policies and directives poses a specific challenge for school principals in relation to the management of change. The participants expressed the need for management development to enable them to interpret and implement new policies. Information Communication Technology stands out in the findings as an area where principals require urgent support, together with aspects of human resources management such as instructional leadership and staff development.

Financial management emerged from the findings as a key area for training. The study found that the majority of the participants had little knowledge of how to manage the finances of the school. The study found that some principals were struggling to manage the School Development Fund in a manner that would satisfy the parents and cater to the needs of the school. The efficient management of the School Development Fund is particularly important as this is a valuable supplement to government support.

Other studies have stressed the need for management development to empower and build capacity among principals to enable them to manage schools successfully. These views are in line with current thinking in educational management and leadership that suggests that the role of the principals has become highly specialized, and that teaching experience alone is no longer regarded as a criterion for success.

Another recent study of the Leadership Development Program revealed that the “program helped the participating principals to experience personal changes and professional

growth". These findings are congruent with the perceived benefits of management development as expressed by the participants in my study.

The study found that there was a lack of monitoring and coordination of the management development programmes at the regional level. Reference was made to leadership and management programmes initiated by the Ministry of Education to assist principals in the past. My findings suggest that these programmes died (at least in the Kavango region) due to a lack of follow-up. Madasi (2004) points out that the lack of supervision and support on the part of immediate supervisors is a major stumbling block to the implementation of management development programmes.

6.3 Significance of the study

This study gives an understanding of how participants perceive and experience management development programmes. The study also gives a clear picture of the participants' perceived management development needs. The role of the principal as the agent of change at school level has often been underestimated, but was emphasized time and again in this study (as it has been in other studies carried out locally: Kantema 2001, Kawana 2004 and Udjombala 2006).

The significance of these findings is that they bring into focus the fact that management development is at the heart of empowerment and capacity building. Management development for school principals should therefore be a priority in any attempt to address the shortcomings in our education system.

It is hoped that the findings of this study might serve to help sensitize the decision-makers in the Ministry of Education and Teacher Unions to the need for capacity building among school managers. The study could also trigger a new way of thinking about management development among school managers and encourage them to look for opportunities instead of waiting for the Ministry of Education to do something for them. It is further hoped that the findings might encourage the Ministry of Education to embark

on a follow-up study to assess the impact of existing management development initiatives.

The study could also serve as resource material at the training colleges and other institutions of higher learning. The Namibian education system is undergoing major changes as a result of the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programmed (ETSIP). I believe that this study is therefore timely and could make a small contribution to the current debate on education leadership and management in the Namibian context.

6.4 Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that management development for school managers is long overdue. The lack of a well-defined management development policy to guide and direct officials at both national and regional level poses a major challenge to the Ministry of Education. I therefore recommend that the Ministry of Education develop a comprehensive management development policy for the education sector, to help officials in management positions cope with the challenges they are currently facing.

It emerged from this study that the inspectors of education could not provide the necessary support to principals, as they themselves lacked adequate support to enable them to carry out their mandate. If there is indeed a policy in place (something this researcher could not establish), it needs to be updated to be in line with current approaches to management development internationally, and also to take into consideration the provisions of ETSIP.

The Ministry of Education, with the assistance of development partners, has since independence embarked on a number of leadership and management programmes, on a small scale and at times not properly coordinated. The implementation and monitoring of these programmes are mainly done at the regional office. Inasmuch as the Head Office is trying to empower the regions, I would recommend that the Directorate of Programmes and Quality Assurance (PQA) keeps an eye on the implementation, and assesses the

impact of these programmes from time to time. Prokopenko (1998) advised that management development in an organization remains the responsibility of the top management. In the context of Namibia, this suggests that the office of the Permanent Secretary should take full responsibility through the relevant structures when it comes to the monitoring of management development programmes.

The coordination and supervision of management development programmes is very important. I support the recommendation made by Udjombala (2006) that the Ministry need to supervise and coordinate these programmes to ensure that the recipients do not get a raw deal. Coordination and supervision also refers to the aspect of quality, which agencies tasked with conducting this training tend to neglect. Such training should preferably be conducted by officials with an impeccable record in educational management and leadership.

In other countries, learning from experience or field-based learning (learning on the job) has been found more appropriate for school principals when it comes to management development programmes (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Bezzina, 2001; Riley & Mulford, 2007). I therefore recommend that institutions and service providers entrusted with management development for principals consider applying this approach to learning. I further recommend that the Ministry of Education establish contacts with the management of the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance in South Africa to familiarize themselves with the leadership programmes offered by this institution.

Institutions of higher learning dealing with student teachers in education management and leadership should establish rapport with the Ministry of Education to establish the needs and challenges faced by principals at the grassroots level.

Although the responsibility of providing management development lies with the employer, I recommend that the Teacher Unions sensitize their members, especially school managers, to explore opportunities to upgrade themselves. Principals should also

be encouraged to establish networks with their counterparts in their region and beyond to share experiences on good management practices.

The cluster system was introduced, *inter alia*, to improve communication among schools and reduce dependency on regional offices. I recommend that the clustering system be strengthened to play a more meaningful role in the capacity building of school managers. And since a lack of resources has been a constraint in the successful implementation of the cluster system, I further recommend that resources be made available in the regional budgets to cater for the needs of the cluster centres.

To motivate principals to take part in the management development programmes, I recommend that an appropriate mechanism be put in place to recognize their efforts.

6.5 Suggestions for future research

Organized management development in education is still at the infancy stage in Namibia. As such it remains an area that requires further investigation. The implementation of ETSIP makes it even more appropriate and urgent to further explore the impact on teaching and learning of management development for school principals. The design and methods of delivery comprise another area that could be looked into. This study targeted a few principals and inspectors; it would be interesting to widen its scope to include, for example, the heads of department who share the leadership responsibility with the principals at school level.

Most of the participants in the study are highly qualified and have served in their positions for a couple of years. I suggest that a similar study be conducted among newly appointed principals. Such a study would preferably be conducted by a researcher from outside the Ministry of Education, as most of the studies available on management development in education have been conducted by officials in the Ministry of Education.

6.6 Limitations of the study

This study, like any other study of this magnitude, has obvious limitations. The fact that only five principals and two inspectors of education participated in the study suggests that the findings cannot be generalized to all principals in Namibia. It is also not statistically generalizable. And since the study was conducted in the educational setting, its findings may not be generalizable to any other organization. The principals who participated in the study were mostly from schools in the vicinity of Rundu town in the Kavango region. Studies in other areas or regions may reveal a different picture. My position as member of the regional management team could have been a limitation in the conduct of a study involving school principals and inspectors of education whom I directly and indirectly supervise; however, it turned out to be a major advantage, as principals and inspectors participated willingly and enthusiastically.

Another limitation associated with qualitative studies in general and this study in particular is that the findings could have been influenced by my personal biases. The subjectivity which is a major assumption of the interpretive paradigm turns to be its major limitation. The flexibility in my methods of data collection and analysis might have had an impact on the findings of the study as well, serving partly to compromise their validity and quality.

6.7 Concluding thoughts

The goal of conducting research is to learn and to gain knowledge about a particular phenomenon. The process of conducting research afforded me the opportunity to learn from other research in my field of research interest, and – especially – to learn from the participants in the study. As I learnt about the experience of other people and the phenomena under investigation I began to reflect on my own practice. This reflection afforded me the opportunity to view the role of school principals differently, and re-shaped my thinking to enable me to appreciate the challenges facing principals in the 21st

century. This personal paradigm shift will help me to take a different approach in dealing with principals in my work situation.

As a first-time researcher I found the exercise of conducting research very stimulating and adventurous. Though it has been a laborious process, I gain satisfaction from the knowledge that I have made a small contribution to the ETSIP debate, and helped to fill the gap that exists in literature about management development in the Namibian context.

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