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**Teachers' perceptions of participative management in
a primary school in Namibia**

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Abstract

Participative management, a key theme in contemporary management literature, is one of the central aims of the decentralization policy in Namibian education. Current perceptions of participative management on the part of teachers in Namibia are therefore of topical interest. This study set out to explore such perceptions among teachers in a Namibian primary school.

The study is an interpretive case study focusing on six individual teachers' understanding and experience of participative management within their place of work, a primary school in the Oshikoto region of Namibia. Semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis were used to gather data.

The study revealed a strong sense of commitment among the respondents to participative management and its accompanying practices, such as shared decision making and broad stakeholder involvement. Participative management was implemented chiefly through a committee structure for school organisation and government. Respondents also highlighted challenges facing participative management, such as the persistence of autocratic leadership, conflicts of interest in decision making, laziness and unwillingness among staff members, and a lack of understanding among parents concerning their role in the schooling of their children. HIV/AIDS was also seen to pose challenges to the free and frequent participation of stakeholders.

The chief recommendation arising from these findings is that school leaders and managers' understanding of tenets of participative management, such as site-based management and democratic management approaches, requires improvement and development.

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

Participative management has been an interest of mine since I joined the teaching profession in 1999, and more especially so since I became a principal two years ago. This interest and the experience of running a school prompted me to examine the theory in relation to practice.

In the coursework for this Master's degree I was fortunate to be introduced to organisation development (OD), and one of our assignments was to conduct a survey-data-feedback workshop in Namibia. The exercise opened the door for me to launch an investigation into participative management, since I used the OD assignment to gain an initial impression of the school management field. In the OD workshop some teachers reported autocratic and non-participative practices among the management and leadership of the school. These findings triggered the current study, which I chose to situate in the same school.

Of course, participative management is a global movement and – as one of the new fundamental school management focuses in Namibia – it is now formalized in the policy of the Ministry of Education. I therefore thought it would be useful to explore the phenomenon to find out how teachers perceive and experience it in the field.

The call for “broader participation” by stakeholders in the system of education management (MBEC 1993) indicates that participative management was introduced soon after the independence of the country. In this study I investigate the impact made by, and the changes that have accompanied the participative or democratic approach to education management in Namibia in the 17 years since independence. I was interested in examining the phenomenon in relation to the following statement from the document *Toward education for all: Development brief for education, culture and training* (MBEC 1993):

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

In the next section I give a brief overview of the context of this call for democratic participation.

1.2 Context of the study

Education all around the world has “undergone restructuring reform” (Rice and Schneider 1994, p. 43). For example in America there has been a wide spread call for educational reform. This reform involves change in organizational structures and instructional strategies.

Like many other post-colonial African countries, Namibia and South Africa adopted the principle of democratic participation by stakeholders in decision making as a top priority in their education systems. In the past, there has been a lack of parental involvement in school management (Niitembu 2006, p. 2), and a comparable lack of participation in decision making by teachers (Rice and Schneider 1994, p. 43). Rice and Schneider give as example the American education system, which now emphasizes teachers’ involvement in decision making, which is seen as effective in bringing about improvements. In their research in the USA, Rice and Schneider noted that teachers showed a willingness and desire to be included in the decision-making processes at their school (Rice and Schneider 1994, p. 43).

Mungunda (2003, p. ii) highlights participative decision making as motivating teachers to work for “common goals”. He also notes that participation promotes a sense of ownership and commitment, which leads to positive relationships among stakeholders in a school.

In the Namibian educational context, restructuring and reform are being driven by a philosophy underpinned by four main goals: “access, equity, quality and democracy” (MBEC 1993, p. 32). There is therefore an attempt, as Mungunda (2003, p. 2) argues in his study, to promote the devolution and decentralization of power and authority from the ministry of education to the regional education office, from the regional office to the principal, and from the principal to the teachers.

The reform process in the Namibian education system is aimed at replacing the old management approach in education, which was characterized by fragmentation and structured by the segregation policies of the South African government. That old system of education also featured a rigid hierarchical structure that denied teachers access to decision-making processes and confined them to the role of classroom managers. This prevented many teachers from making a potentially valuable contribution to the development of management in their schools.

It is now seventeen years since participative management was formally introduced into Namibian schools, but little has been done to investigate teachers’ perceptions and experience of the practice. The exception to this is Mungunda (2003), but he focused his study on the perceptions of principals alone. Hence this study aims to investigate “ordinary” teachers’ perceptions of participative management in Namibian primary schools. The study attempts to examine “how and to what extent” teachers engage in the management of their schools.

This study is potentially important to the Ministry of Education in Namibia, education officers, school managers (principals), teachers and – by no means least – the community of the school in which the study was conducted. It is hoped that the study will be useful to these various constituencies by providing a clear picture of how teachers perceive democratic participation in schools management in post-independent Namibia, and in this way help to persuade those in management positions (specifically, school managers and teachers) to apply participative management more extensively in their institutions. It is further hoped that the findings of this study will help the government to evolve a plan of action to address the weaknesses identified within the management of schools in the country.

1.3 The research goal

This study set out to investigate teachers' perceptions, experience and understanding of participative management.

1.4 Orientation

Social science researchers approach their material in different ways, choosing an orientation that best helps them to understand the reality of the phenomenon under investigation. This study adopts an *interpretive* orientation because it best assists the researcher to "discover meanings and interpretations" as they are "experienced by individuals" in their "settings" (Cohen, Manion and Morris, 2000, p. 10). To interpretive researchers, reality is something constructed by the individuals involved in the study. People act upon what they believe to be real and true, and give logical reasons for doing so. This study therefore seeks to understand the meanings that six teachers attached to participative management in the school under investigation.

1.5 Methodology

The study employed a case study methodology to investigate the teachers' perceptions of participative management. In a case study, the researcher gets in touch with a real situation and engages with the people in that situation, so as to listen to what they have to say about the phenomenon in question.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants for the study. Stake (1995, p. 64) states that researchers purposively select participants on the ground that their points of view are likely to differ and thus collectively provide a fuller picture. Six teachers were drawn from the eleven teachers at the school. The selection included some members of school management. Teachers were selected on the basis of their teaching experience, which ranged from those who had just started, through those who taught for more than three years, to those who had taught for more than fourteen

or eighteen years. The main reason for selecting teachers in this way was that, because some were new in the system and some not, they were likely to experience participative management differently.

To generate more, and more various, data the study employed three different data collection techniques, namely the semi-structured interview, observation and document review. The interview was the chief data-generating technique, followed by observation and document review. A set of semi-structured interview questions was piloted before it was employed to capture data. Yin (2003, p. 79) argues that the purpose of piloting is to refine and check the relevance of the line of questioning. Errors identified in the structure of the questions were rectified, and the interviews were tape-recorded.

With regard to the data analysis process, I first dipped into the data and “got a sense” of it, as Creswell suggests (2003, p. 192). With the research question at back of my mind, I then developed themes to guide the process of analysis. Data from interviews were transcribed, while data from observation and document review were summarized and incorporated when they were relevant to the themes.

For reasons of quality assurance, data were captured utilizing triangulation. Data from each source were able to communicate with one other and at the same time supplement and complement one another. Checking and interviewee debriefing occurred several times after each interview to ensure that what was recorded was what was reported by the respondents.

1.6 The structure of the thesis

Chapter Two presents an overview of literature on participative management. The overview includes participative management in education policy, site-based management in relation to management and leadership theories such as collegial theories, participative leadership theory, distributed leadership and teamwork. The discussion focuses on the characteristics of these theories and their relevance to participative management in education.

Chapter Three details the research methodology used in the study. This chapter covers aspects such as the orientation of the study, the methodology employed, data collection techniques, data analysis processes, ethical issues and limitations.

Chapter Four presents the data and seeks to interpret it, along the lines of identified themes. These include: strong commitment to participative management, committees and teamwork, delegation and distributed leadership, involvement of parents in education, the role of the SRC in the school, and the benefits of and challenges facing participative decision making.

In Chapter Five the findings are discussed by integrating the themes from Chapter Four with the needs of the school and the challenges it faces, such as commitment to participative management, committees facilitating participative management, decision-making processes, teamwork, meetings, leadership development, and the benefits of and challenges facing participative management in the school.

Chapter Six presents a summary of my findings, and offers recommendations for action and future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of literature relevant to the topic under investigation in this study, namely participative management. In Namibia the drive towards more democratic and participative forms of management and leadership is spearheaded by the policy of decentralization. The policy emphasizes the devolution of power in all ministries from the central government to regional and even local levels. An example of this initiative is the implementation of the school cluster system, whereby schools are grouped into clusters and managed collegially (Aipinge, 2007). Site-based management thus serves as a useful framework for making sense of how schools operate in a system of collegiality (Aipinge 2007, p. 79). In site-based management, team work and team management become significant, as well as a form of leadership that emphasizes participation and the distribution of responsibility.

This chapter begins by briefly explaining the policy on decentralization, and then moves on to site-based management, which was used as a framework for the study. Within this framework I then discuss collegial models of management (Bush 2004, p. 64), participative management and leadership, and distributed leadership.

2.2 Participative management in education policy

The movement toward greater decentralization is a world-wide phenomenon. According to Stevenson (2001, p. 103) countries around the world (for example, West African countries) are in the process of restructuring and transforming their government sectors, and even private institutions are following suit. Stevenson argues that the rationale for this development is the universally felt need for the devolution of

power from a central authority to local levels of control and management, in line with the global movement toward the democratization of government and business (ibid.).

Namibia is similarly faced with the challenge to transform, particularly in the government sector. The Namibian policy on decentralization expects people at the grassroots level to participate in decision making on their own affairs within their own local environment (Namibia, Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993, p. 170). In addition to rendering decision making more inclusive, the policy is designed to extend, enhance and guarantee participatory democracy among the stakeholders (Namibia, Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing and Rural Development, 1998).

Within the framework of the Namibian decentralization policy the Ministry of Education introduced a new policy entitled *Toward education for all: A development brief for education, culture and training* (1993). It is a policy document that translates the Namibian philosophy of education into a concrete and implementable government plan (Namibia, MEC, 1993). Underlying the new policy are four main goals, namely, access, equity, equality and democracy in education. The Namibian and South African educational systems of the past era were characterized by rigid hierarchical structures which inhibited the participation of all stakeholders (South Africa, Department of Education, 1996, p. 13). *Toward education for all* aims to redress the imbalances of the past by creating a system of education that embraces democratic principles and encourages the participation of all stakeholders in decision making. Unlike the apartheid system of the previous era where rules were laid down by a few people in formal leadership positions, the new policy encourages and promotes participatory leadership in which all stakeholders play an active role in making decisions about education. Furthermore, under the new policy parents are encouraged to participate in school governance, and teachers are empowered to act as managers in the day-to-day running of the school (Namibia, MEC, 1993). It follows that the more stakeholders are being empowered to run their own schools, the more schools are becoming what are described as “self-managing organizations” by *The report of the task team on educational management development* (South Africa, DoE, 1996, p. 28). This report recognizes the value of multiple sites of governance and the decentralization of authority to schools and communities. The notion of self-management or site-based

management has become a central issue in management literature today and serves as the theoretical framework for this study.

2.3 Site-based management

In the previous section I discussed the devolution of power and authority to the local level through the process of decentralization. I also highlighted the new policy demands for broader participation by stakeholders in education. In this section I focus on how site-based management is viewed in the literature.

2.3.1 A framework for site-based management

I used the framework proposed by Stevenson (2001, p. 103) to make sense of what site-based management is all about. Stevenson's framework gives a clear picture of what site-based management means in terms of contemporary education management thinking. He conducted a case study in Australia, in a context in which site-based management and shared decision making were state policy initiatives. He describes site-based management as characterized by structural, cultural and "openness" features. These features provide a useful template for the discussion of site-based management that follows.

2.3.1.1 Structural features

Education management has traditionally been a "rigid hierarchical structure and centralized system," characterized by a top-down dynamic (Bezzina 1997, p. 194). And education stakeholders, for example parents, were not involved in the management of schools (Mendelssohn in Niitembu, 2006, p. 2). Teachers were relegated to classroom management only because of the absence of a participative structure in the school. Eventually this resulted in disillusion and stress among teachers (Bezzina 2000, p. 300).

The malaise began to be addressed by "site-based management," defined by Stevenson (2001, p. 104) as a "restructuring of the school system that has occurred in many western

countries since the late 1980s". He views the movement as a "decentralization of decision-making toward school or site-based management (SBM) and shared decision making (SDM)". Site-based management is characterized by "participatory decision making," as stakeholders are afforded an opportunity to contribute to management through structures that they initiate themselves in their school (Stevenson 2001, p. 104)

In his study on the implementation of site-based management in an Australian school, Stevenson (2001, p. 104) noted that the management of site-managed schools proceeded through "committee" or "forum" structures. In his findings he identified the following structural features of the site-based managed school:

The decision-making structure comprises a school Advisory Council that oversees four other standing committees: Curriculum, Human Resources, Resources and Management, and Social Justice and Equity (these four areas were chosen to match the organization structure of the state education department). The membership of the Advisory Council includes representatives of the administration, teachers, ancillary staff, students (from each grade or year level), parents, and the community. (p. 105)

Bezzina views site-based management differently from Stevenson. Bezzina sees it as "a centre of social unity". Introducing site-based management means the "creation of a social structure that places the school under certain conditions where they could become more reflective on their own practice than before" (Bezzina 1997, p. 197). Site-based management means that schools review their management structures so to see how best they can manage themselves. Bezzina refers to this development as "a moving from the shackles of dependence to [a situation] of autonomy" (Bezzina 1997, p. 197).

Bezzina goes on to emphasize that the "SMS [self-management school structure] is not about money;" rather, "SMS focuses directly on the learner and his/her needs" (Bezzina 1997, p. 198). Site-based management is therefore a movement aimed at improving service delivery in education. Bezzina (1997, p. 196) argues that: "For institutions to improve their performances, the professional culture of encouraging freedom of choice, authority, responsibility through decision-making power and participative structures, should be nurtured" (p. 196).

Other writers maintain that schools should not enjoy total freedom to establish their own structures, but rather function within the central authority policy framework (Cardwell and Spinks in Thurlow 2003, p. 8; Bush 2003, p. 74; Cheung and Cheng 1996, p. 17). Caldwell and Spinks (in Thurlow, 2003) explain that:

One area for which there has been significant and consistent decentralization to the school level of authority is related to the allocation of resources. This decentralization is administrative rather than political, with decisions being made within a framework of national policy or guidelines. The school remains accountable to the central authority for the manner in which resources are allocated. (p. 8)

For Caldwell and Spinks, then, while schools are free to allocate resources, they must remain “accountable” for these resources and their utilization to the “central education authority” and its overarching policies (see also Bush 2003, p. 74; Cheung and Cheng 1996, p. 17).

2.3.1.2 Cultural features

Like the structure, the culture of education management in Namibia has been shaped by a history of “racial, regional and gender inequality, as well as ideology distortion in teaching and learning” (South Africa: Department of Education 1996, p. 18). It is not surprising, therefore, that some claim that what is required is not only “restructuring of the system but also reculturing of the system” of education management as a whole (Stevenson 2001, p. 103). Stevenson argues that there is a need for cultural change, such as the “creation of a professional community” characterized by “shared norms and values, collaboration, risk taking and reflective dialogue”. For Stevenson, the site-based managed school manifests a culture of “mission or vision” and “shared belief”. A central such belief is that “the school is a community of learners,” in that “everyone is a learner in some sense”. Site-based school management promotes an inclusive approach and values all the stakeholders. The findings of Stevenson’s case study of site-based management implementation in Seymore High School in Australia show that the school displayed the following cultural elements:

Norm of equal treatment among staff members, all people have equal right to participate in decision making through the structure of forum. People are treated fairly irrespective of their status in the school (p. 18).

Bezzina (1997, p. 199) agrees that in such a culture all individuals are valued. Thus the site-based management approach is characterized by sharing. Staff members and other stakeholders are encouraged, motivated and supported to participate in management and contribute to the development of the school. Pashiardis (1994, p. 14) claims that an ideal management culture can be created if “schools accept and favour a participatory style of decision making”. Kochan and Reed (2005) share a similar perspective on the decentralization of decision making in schools. They argue that:

Those who closest to the daily work of the school should be engaged in making decisions about the organization and its structure, goals, and objectives, and should be engaged in a process of continuous learning about them. (p. 72)

For Kochan and Reed, people in a particular school have the right to make their own decisions because they are familiar with both the immediate needs and the longer-term management objectives of their schools.

The decision-making process outlined above will not materialize if positive relationships and a spirit of openness do not obtain among stakeholders in a school.

2.3.1.3 Openness

As a public institution within a community, a school depends upon external support for its survival. It is therefore *de facto* an open organization.

Openness is a salient feature of the site-based managed school, with stakeholders working in a “collaborative” manner Kochan and Reed (2005, p. 72). In this environment, interpersonal relations are characterized by openness and honesty. Stevenson describes teachers, learners and parents as working in an “open and friendly” manner, “sharing ideas” and helping one another in school affairs (2001, p. 107). For example, teachers help one another in lesson planning. Stevenson explains that the site-

based management approach encourages “faculty and departmental members to participate in professional development” (2001, p. 107).

Apart from this openness, Stevenson (*ibid.*) sees site-based management as fostering a culture of sharing and exchanging management skills that will help a school to achieve its educational goals, inculcating in the process a great “sense of ownership, high morale, and commitment” among its members. Such a culture encourages teachers to “attend workshops” and “visit other schools” for “information sharing”. Kochan and Reed (1996, p. 17) agree that site-based management encourages “teamwork, empowerment, commitment and initiative” among school staff members.

2.3.1.4 Delegation, distribution of power and empowerment

Site-based management involves the delegation and distribution of authority and the empowerment of organizational members to participate in the management of the school (Bezzina 1997, p. 195; Stevenson 2001, p. 103).

Bezzina (1997, p. 195) argues that the very rationale of site-based management is the empowerment of people in schools. As Malen (in Stevenson 2000, p. 103) puts it, in site-based management principals are given “formal authority” and power by the central authority to pass on to staff members in the school. They practise management through processes of “delegation and distribution” (Malen in Stevenson 2001, p. 103). Teachers are delegated to represent the school in various activities outside or within the school, while the principal gets on with other management tasks in the school (*ibid.*). An instance of empowerment is the appointment of teachers as “curricular head” or “committee or forum chairperson” (Stevenson 2001, p. 103).

Some writers argue that site-based management encourages and promotes the development of leadership among teachers (Maeroff in Bezzina 1997, p. 197; Van der Westhuizen 1991, p. 173). For Van der Westhuizen (1991, p. 173), delegation serves as “in-service training for staff members,” preparing them to be future school leaders. Pashiardis (1994, p. 15) agrees, maintaining that teachers in a site-based management context are not “waiting until they became

principals” to influence policies but are already working in partnership with “administrators” and effectively “shar[ing] power” in the school.

The movement towards site-based management in education accompanies the “move by central authorities around the world to give more power, responsibility and authority to schools” (Bezzina 2000, p 299). The idea in question is grounded in the principle of the democratic participation of stakeholders in education and the decentralization of authority to schools. For this reason the concepts of the collegial model of governance, participative management and distributed leadership become important.

2.3.3 Collegial models

Collegial models emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as the best way to manage primary schools (Campbell and Southworth, cited in Bush, p. 71). The concept of the “collegial model” emphasizes that decision-making is a “shared responsibility in an organization”. “Collegial” assumes that policies are determined and decisions made through a process of discussion. Unlike formal organizations whose structure is vertical, with decisions made by leaders, the collegial model has a horizontal structure that allows for participation by all the staff (Bush, *ibid.*).

According to Brown and Boyle (cited in Bush 2003, p. 74), the collegial model manifests itself in education management as a system of committees. Committees are assigned “different management responsibilities” or roles to play (Brown and Boyle in Bush 2003, p. 74). Examples of committees in schools are the School Management Team (SMT), School Board (SB) and curriculum committees (CCs). Committees work in collaboration to manage the school. In addition all stakeholders are formally represented in the structure and in various decision-making bodies Bush (2003, p. 66) within the school. For example, teachers and parents are represented by some of their number on the School Board committee, and these representatives are accountable to their constituency.

“Participative” or shared decision making forms the central feature of collegial models of management (Bush 2003, p. 74). The “consultation” of “members” before decisions are taken (Bush 2003, p. 74) is critical in this form of organization. Decisions are then made on behalf of these members by a “limited group of senior colleagues in a spirit of pure collegiality” (Bush 2003, p. 64).

Teachers are valued for their subject knowledge and experience, which means that they enjoy the “authority of the expert” instead of “positional authority” in collegial schools (Bush 2003, p. 64). They are thus empowered to make decisions appropriate to their actual teaching and learning needs. Collegial leaders believe that “knowledge is power,” rather than position within a formal hierarchy.

However, the collegial model is a demanding one that requires patience and a “high level of commitment” from staff members to bring about change in a school (Bush 2003, p. 75; Webb and Vulliamy 1996, in Bush 2003, p. 75). Webb and Vulliamy (1996, in Bush 2003, p. 75) point to the “time-consuming nature” of lengthy meetings, which can result in a “lack of agreement and action” or implementation. But they nevertheless recommend collegiality as the best management approach in schools. They base this finding on a study conducted in 50 collegial primary schools in England and Wales. They write:

In a collegial school teachers talk about teachings, they share planning and preparations”. The aspect of classroom observation is also common and mutual training development is in the school. The collegial model of school depends on teachers professional values in that school. The collegiality spirit among teachers, learners, and parents in the school community many times leads to the development of trust and willingness among staff members to give and receive criticism in order to enhance practice. (p. 64)

The aspiration toward “collaboration” that prevails in such schools is rooted in a collegial approach to management. The study also found that this approach conducted to the “growth of openness, discussion and the sharing of ideas among teachers” (Webb and Vulliamy 1996, in Bush 2003, p. 75). Subject leaders were viewed as playing vital management roles in curriculum planning at the school.

The idea of shared decision making in schools, as articulated in Bush's collegial theory, necessarily involves the practice of participative leadership, whose characteristics and relevance to education management are discussed in the next section.

2.3.2 Participative management and leadership

The participative leadership approach is rooted in the notion of "principle-centred leadership" (Bezzina 2000, p. 299). Crucially, it envisages leadership as vested in many people rather than in single individuals. It is thus an aspect of the paradigm shift towards decentralization in the system of education.

Bush regards participative leadership theory as a member of the "collegial" leadership family (Bush 2003, p. 78). Participative leadership features in collegiality and teamwork, since decision-making processes are shared responsibilities in the school. And such processes are "justified by the principle of democratic participation" (Bush 2003, p. 78). Equal treatment and participation are intrinsic to the system, and no discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender or any other social category is permitted.

A school which adopts the framework of participative management invites the participation of staff members, learners and parents in decision making and management. This means, most particularly, that all staff members are treated equally and fairly in the school, and their contributions to decision making are recognized and valued.

The participative model assumes that to include teachers in decision making will lead to the effective functioning of school management. To the extent that the spirit of participative democracy gives the staff members the freedom to participate in all the affairs of the school, it functions – according to Sergiovanni (cited in Bush 2003, p. 78) – as a 'bond' that binds them together as a team and encourages a culture of sharing and togetherness. What is more, when people are involved in the decision-making process and in the implementation of action plans at a school, they gain a feeling of ownership.

The spirit of ownership motivates teachers to be committed to their school work, and further enhances the culture of cooperation.

Sergiovanni (ibid.) also points out that the participative approach can play a critical role in reducing the burden of responsibilities shouldered by the principal. The principal feels free to delegate other staff members to take on management responsibilities and duties in the school. In this way more is accomplished in a shorter time. Leadership sharing leads to leadership development among staff members and the “entire school community” (Sergiovanni in Bush 2003, p. 78).

The notion of democratic leadership is part of leadership decentralization and distribution in the system of education. In the next section I discuss the distributed leadership approach in education management.

2.3.3 Distributed leadership

As Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 30) describe its history, “distributed leadership is far from new” and dates back to the 1950s. The strategy of distributing leadership emphasizes the relationship between the “structure (school) and agency (people)” where the organization is a medium of human interaction. Advocates of the approach wanted to understand the interaction between the organization and the people that comprise it. How are they mutually dependent? What are the interactions of the two to produce practice? Is there a positive relationship between the school leadership and the staff within it? They believe that, in order to practice distributed leadership in a school, one must first address these questions.

The concept of distributed leadership has been defined in different ways, but the core notion is the dispersal of leadership roles among different people in the school. According to Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 30), the work of teachers can be spread, via “formal and informal” practice, among individual members of the school community or in various groups or committees or departments. Spillane et al. (cited in Coles and Southworth 2005, p. 38) share this understanding, but use the phrases “stretched over”

and “extension of the leadership boundary in the school” to define the concept of distributed leadership.

At the heart of the distributed management approach is the recognition of “individuals’ knowledge and skills” in the specific position or role in which he/she is serving the school. Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 29) make the point that this recognition can help to make teachers feel secure, valued and accepted. The feeling of acceptance will enhance their motivation and commitment. Distributed leadership can also conduce to networking, learning organization and partnerships among the school community, which all result in the building of capacity within the school.

Spillane et al. (cited in Coles and Southworth 2005, p. 39) maintain that the distributed leadership approach encourages “coordination,” “joint leadership” and “collaboration”. In this kind of environment teachers are working hand-in-hand and as a team to help each other achieve a common goal. Spillane et al. (2005, p. 39) cite the example of “a literacy committee meeting of Adam School” to show how collaborative leadership practice can work. Leaders in Adam School believe that:

Reading across all the subjects could improve students’ literacy performance in the school. For that the principal invites all teachers to that particular literacy meeting. In addition to the principal and the deputy other three teachers were also leaders in the school. The principal desire the school success and acknowledged by the staff for her expertise in literacy teaching and the deputy principal has been teaching literacy coordinator for 20 years. The deputy brings with her role of being an experienced classroom teachers and a series of textbooks for language art to the meeting.

In analysing the discourses and interaction of teachers during the meeting, Spillane et al. (op. cit.) conclude that the leaders played different roles by encouraging each other to contribute their ideas and be open.

2.3.4 Teamwork

Middlewood (in Lumby et al. (2003, p. 171) defines teamwork as a principle that embodies people working together as a group and sharing the same values in the same

organization. In such a situation people in an organization are united in working toward the same goal. Similarly, the task team Report on Education (1996, p. 27) describes teamwork in terms of people working in a partnership and engaging in activity on the basis of mutual understanding.

Walker (1994, p. 38) approaches the concept differently when he defines it as “leadership expansion” in schools. By this he means the delegation by the principal of leadership roles to different groups of people in the school. In this case there would be various departments with specific management responsibilities in the school. Walker argues that the making of decisions at departmental level helps to improve the performance of the department and the school too (ibid.).

Walker (1994, p. 38) maintains that teamwork is especially important in the self-managing school, where leadership responsibilities are considerable:

In exercising authority, the principals should be guided by the unambiguous findings of the research on leadership and management in virtually every setting in the public and private sector, namely, there should be appropriate consultation with stakeholders, and much planning should be carried out in team, at the management level and among staff in their area of interest and expertise (p. 38).

In this sort of context, the principal cannot be responsible for every aspect of school management, which makes successful team management essential. Noting that “team management is well known as the best method of running the school in Australia,” Walker (1994, p. 38) goes on to point out that teamwork also helps enable a school to control processes of change taking place within it and to respond to environmental changes on the outside. Finally, Walker notes that teamwork is an expression of the democratic participation of teachers and other relevant stakeholders in the management of the school. In the site-based management context, collaboration and cooperation among teachers are very important as they improve the standard of management, which in turn is bound to improve learners’ academic performance (ibid).

Middlewood (in Lumby et al. 2003, p. 172) points to the advantages of the spirit of teamwork in a school:

They improve communication between people.
They offer more chance of a creative solution to problem, because they bring together a range of talent and abilities.
They can represent the range of interest in an organization- which no one individual can do.
Their decisions are more likely to be more supported and implemented than those made by one person.
They can offer valuable opportunities for personal and professional development, because of the range of task available and the range of relationship that exist (p. 172).

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Teamwork conduces to a sense of ownership of the school as a joint enterprise. If teachers are party to decisions made, they will experience ownership of those decisions and accept responsibility for their consequences.

Allan Walker argues that in the context of teamwork the principal “relocates from the apex of a pyramid to the centre of a network of human relations,” as an agent of change. This means that the role of the principal changes from that of “manager” to that of “facilitator” (Walker 1994, p. 39). And as facilitators, principals can ease the way for other staff members to “emerge as new leaders” within the school. Since schools run according to a team management approach employ participatory decision making, the system is essentially the same as that of participative leadership.

Walker (1994, p. 39) maintains that the principal in a teamwork management school is a learner, along with the staff members and students. He is no longer the source of all knowledge, but an experienced individual sharing management skills and knowledge with others in the school, whilst learning in turn from them.

Duignan and McPherson (in Walker 1994, p. 51) describe a team leader as a person who challenges other team members to participate in activities aimed at helping the school realize its dream. They further describe the team leader as a person who tends to “challenge other educators to commit themselves to approaches in their professional practice that are by nature educative” (ibid.). Team leaders encourage others to work hard and commit to their professional work in the school. Angus (cited in Walker 1994, p. 39) puts it thus:

....if a school leader is to contribute to education reform that goes beyond offering more of the same in disguise it will be necessary to conceive school leadership as something other than part of a top-down hierarchy. Leaders are not necessarily those in position of leadership and people may exercise leadership or perform an act of leadership on some occasion and not others.

He goes on to suggest that school principals should seek ways to renew the relationship between administrators and teachers, the key strategy being the empowerment of others by delegating to them managerial responsibilities.

According to Dick (cited in Walker 1994, p. 39), a principal in a team-based management system should be seen as “Boundary riders”

In this perspective, principals serve as links within the school community. They play the role of networking different groups in the school. Team leaders are thus being called upon to be proactive, consultative, open, and democratic enough to promote school ownership within the team (Dick, as cited in Walker 1994, p. 40).

To Walker teamwork is crucial as because it offers a way of structurally reshaping previous practice to accommodate new ways of teaching and learning in the school (ibid.). This requires placing student learning needs at the heart of decision-making processes. Walker concludes that a teamwork approach can only be successfully implemented if it is rooted in an appropriate school structure characterized by an open and collaborative culture. Wynn and Cuditas (cited in Walker 1994, p. 40) emphasize this point, arguing that teamwork thrives in institutions that are not bureaucratic but problem-solving centred, with broad involvement of stakeholders in decision making processes and a free horizontal and vertical flow of information. In such organizations, authority tends to be associated with expertise and institutional purpose rather than positional hierarchical structures. Thus the organization typically consists of various group clusters (Walker 1994, p. 40), each of which enjoys equal power and importance in the organization. Each group is linked to the others through the appointed chairperson, coordinator and subject head. Groups are working in collaboration toward common goals. All groups revolve around the top leaders in the organization (ibid.). To Walker, (1994, p. 40) the function of the group leaders is to

provide adequate resources for the group to run the team efficiently. Group leaders also serve as communication officers, conveying relevant information to the members of their group. They are also responsible for tasks not yet delegated to members; and in this way, they play a leadership role in the school.

2.4 Overview

In this chapter I have offered a review of literature relevant to the study. The review covered the topics of participative management in education policy and site-based management. It went on to canvass the leadership and management theories that underpin participative management, such as the collegial model, participative leadership, and distributed leadership theory. The last part of this chapter outlined the contribution of teamwork to participative management in education.

In the next chapter I present my research methodology.

Chapter Three

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate and examine teachers' perceptions of participative management in Namibian primary schools. In this chapter I present and defend the research approach used. I also explain my research method, sampling procedures, data gathering technique, and data analysis procedure; I also identify relevant ethical issues and point to some of the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research approach

Researchers in the field of social science can approach their studies with different assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and about how one gains knowledge (epistemology) of that reality. There are three well-known modes of enquiry and explanation, namely the Positivist, Interpretive and Critical approaches or paradigms (Mungunda 2003, p. 29).

Neuman (1997, p. 63) defines a paradigm as "a whole system of thinking which includes basic assumptions to be answered or puzzles to be solved, and the research method to be used", while Covey (in Mungunda 2004, p. 30) refers to a paradigm as "a frame of reference or a mental-map through which we see the world". A paradigm thus defines a research approach and shapes how one will interpret the data.

The positivist approach assumes that reality exists, waiting to be discovered (Bassey 1999, p. 42). The positivist tries to exclude people's subjective perceptions on the ground that reality and meaning are independent of people. Positivists seek to uncover the truth by using experiments and surveys in their research. They credit only what they observe – empirical evidence – and discount

individual experience and beliefs (Cantrell 1993, p. 84). Researchers in this paradigm are interested in testing and they strongly believe that research can only be effective if calculation and measurements are involved. Positivism therefore emphasizes the objectivity, reliability and validity of research.

The interpretive paradigm emerged as a counter to the positivist movement. The interpretive researcher seeks the “subjective perception of individuals” (Cantrell 1993, p. 84). Interpretive research seeks to discover the meanings and interpretations of experience as determined by individuals. Subjectivity is thus critical in the interpretive paradigm. Further, in contrast to the positivists who view reality as ‘out there,’ interpretivists see observers as shaping and being as part of the world they are observing (Bassey 1995, p. 13). Reality is seen as both subjective and multiple. To interpretive researchers, the only reality is that constructed by the individual(s) involved in the research situation, which of course implies that multiple realities exist in a given situation (Creswell 1994, p. 4). They also believe that “what people believe to be true is more important than any objective reality, people act on what they believe” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2000, p. 22).

Like the interpretive paradigm, the critical paradigm considers reality as multiple, but as inevitably constructed and embedded in issues of equity and justice (Cantrell 1993, p. 83). The critical approach is interested in emancipating people through critical enquiry into ideologies that promote unfairness and disparity. The overall rationale of critical paradigm is to address imbalances, inequities, injustices and all forms of domination, so as to make society more democratic and just.

I have chosen to orientate my study within the interpretive paradigm, for reasons that are detailed below.

First, Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 36) argue that the interpretive approach affords the researcher the opportunity to get “inside” the participants and understand from within. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the interpretive paradigm enables a researcher to explore the particular meaning that individuals give to events and experience, and how reality is constructed by them.

Secondly, the interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to understand the phenomena from within the social or cultural context of the natural setting. Fennel (2002, p. 1) is emphatic that “if

you want to get deeper understanding of the phenomena in a certain natural setting, get those who live in it to tell you”.

Thirdly, it allows the researcher to get “thick” descriptions of, and the meanings that respondents attach to, events and the contexts in which they operate. Stake (1995, p. 45) argues that what is expected from interpretive research is “thick description, experiential understanding and multiple reality”. In this study I was seeking to find out “how individuals experience daily life” in their social context (Neuman 1997, p. 69). I wanted to collect thick description of these teachers’ experience with regard to participative management in their school.

3.3 Qualitative case study

Yin (2003, p. 22) argues that:

The case study strategy is most likely to be appropriate for “how and why” questions, so your initial task is to clarify precisely the nature of your study questions in this regard.

Yin is of the view that the form of the research question may determine the type of research strategy to be used. The purpose of my study was to investigate and explore “how” and “to what extent” teachers perceive participative management to be practised in their school. My study was therefore guided by the “how” of teachers’ perception of participative management.

In addition, my study targeted only one particular primary school in Namibia. This is what Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 438) call “a study of a particular”. Yin (2003, p. 14) further defines the case study as: “An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especial when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. I wished to explore in depth the management activities – past and present – at the school by using a range of data collection methods. My aim was to interview teachers in their natural setting so as to gain a comprehensive picture of participative management practice within the setting.

Yin (2003, p. 7) argues that:

case study research relies on many data collection techniques, for example direct observation of the event being studied and interviews with the people involved in the event. It also deals with a full variety of evidence, like documents, artifacts, interviews and observations

In the next section I provide a brief background to my research site.

3.4 Research site

In a case study, the research site is considered as the main centre of information and investigation. It is therefore essential that it be described and its selection justified. According to Stake (1995, p. 63):

To develop vicarious experiences for the reader, to give them a sense of “being there”, the physical situation should be well described. The entryways, the room, the landscape, the hallway, its place on the map, its decor. There should be a balance between the uniqueness and the ordinariness of the place. The physical space is fundamental to meaning for most researchers and most readers.

I conducted the study at Engoyi Primary, a primary school in Namibia. It is located in Engoyi village, in a remote area 1,7 km south of the Ondangwa-Tsumeb main road. Erected in 1979 during the colonial era, the school is in the Onyaanya circuit in the Oshikoto education region. It is 45 km from the regional education office.

The school offers grades 1-7, with an enrolment of 345 learners irrespective of gender. It has 11 teachers and 2 institutional workers (a secretary and a cleaner). The learner-teacher ratio is thus over 30-1. The school has 3 blocks of 11 classrooms, 2 pre-fabricated classrooms, 2 store rooms and one big staffroom which was constructed by the community. The school was recently made a cluster centre, being equipped with all the necessary facilities and meeting the geographical requirement.

I purposively selected this school for a number of reasons. First, the site was convenient for me in terms of travelling as it was near our home. Secondly, I knew some of the teachers as former colleagues from some years ago. I hoped that they would assist by providing me with information and being generally helpful.

Researchers are encouraged purposively to select the participants, site, and materials that they know will best help them to understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2003, p. 187). Stake (1995, p. 56) claims that: “the researcher should have a connoisseur’s appetite for the ‘best’ person, place and occasion. ‘Best’ usually means those that best help us to understand the case, whether typical or not”.

Thirdly I was interested to investigate this case as it featured in feedback to the Organization Development (OD) survey that Helen and I had conducted at the same school earlier in the year.

I shall now briefly explain how I selected my participants.

3.5 Sample size

As indicated above, the school has a total of 11 staff members of varying teaching experience. Six teachers were purposively selected, on the basis of their teaching experience. The selection process was as follow: I selected one new teacher who had been in the teaching profession for one year, followed by one who had taught for three years. I then chose one with five years’ experience, and two others who had been teaching for more that ten years. The last selected participant was one who had taught for more than twenty years (see Chapter Four).

The reason for this purposive selection was that I assumed that years spent in the classroom would be an important variable determining to some extent teachers’ responses to a given phenomenon. It stands to reason that a phenomenon is not always seen in the same way by everyone at the research site (Stake 1995, p. 64). As an interpretive researcher, I was seeking to capture a multiple perspective on the case. I was eager hear from teachers both new and old how they perceived the management approach in question and how they coped with the challenge of it. I wanted to gain access to the full spectrum of descriptions, explanations and meanings that those teachers attached to participative management in their school. And I designed data collection techniques accordingly.

3.6 Data collection techniques

Researchers need to plan and design proper data collection techniques to collect relevant data for their studies. Preparation for data collection can be “complex and difficult,” as Yin (2003, p. 57) puts it. Yin insists that if the data collection techniques are not well designed, the entire study can be jeopardized and nullified.

I designed the following data collection tools: (1) Interview; (2) Observation; and (3) Documents review, and used all three techniques in order to generate rich data. In the following section I describe how the data collection tools were used in the study.

3.6.1 Interviews

Patton (in Merriam 2001, p. 72) argues that:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe ... we cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some other point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meaning they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people question about those things.

The purpose of the interview in qualitative research is to give the researcher an opportunity to get in touch with the interviewees (i.e. the research participants), to ask questions, and to listen and learn from them. I conducted “face to face” interviews to capture data from my participants (Creswell 2003, p. 180), interviewing them one at a time. But before I started with the actual interview sessions, I piloted my semi-structured questions with other four teachers in the school. The purpose of piloting was to check that all the questions to be asked were relevant to the research question (Yin 2003, p. 79). After the piloting, mistakes and errors were rectified and the process continued. In the interviews, I used a tape-recorder to capture my respondents’ answers. I also took notes of some key words for probing purposes during the interview session. Probing helped me to gain deeper insights and a clearer

understanding of the teachers with regard to the case in question. I transcribed the interviews every day after each session.

My interview questions covered areas such as teachers' understanding of participative management, the role of teachers in the management of the school, the benefits of participative management and the challenges of participative management in the school.

3.6.2 Observation

Observation was the second data collection technique used in this study. Observation is defined as a technique whereby the researcher collects data through "seeing" and "hearing" the participants in the study (McMillan 1993, p. 256). It is used to supplement direct responses to questions or statements. I focused my observations on school meetings, whether departmental, management or general staff meetings. I observed teachers' participation in discussion and their involvement in decision-making processes during these meetings. I also observed how the principal coordinated and involved staff members in school management activities.

I designed and employed an observation schedule to record all the targeted observation data at meetings. I acted as a non-participant observer throughout the observation process.

3.6.3 Document analysis

Document analysis was the third data collection tool in this study. According to Creswell (2003, p. 187), "documents" can mean public documents (for example, newspapers and the minutes of meetings) or private documents such as journals, letters and e-mail correspondence. I reviewed the minutes of all previous meetings at the school from the beginning of 2006 up to July, 2007. My review included the minutes of parents' meetings, management and staff meetings, project meetings, and subject meetings. I also obtained access to the proposals for the Ibis and Itana projects in the school.

In my reviewing I concentrated mainly on teachers' meetings, notably the agendas and the resolutions or decisions reached at those meetings. The reason for reviewing past and present minutes of meetings was to compile a comparative record of attendance and participation up to the time of the study. Using a document analysis schedule, I kept a journal in which I recorded each document reviewed.

3.7 Ethical considerations

A research study can never be conducted in a vacuum. There will inevitably be rules, regulations and sensitivities that need to be recognized. It is crucial for researchers not to contravene these or cause offence. I was therefore guided by ethical considerations in my study. Creswell (2003, p. 64) cautions researchers to "respect" their participants and "avoid putting them at risk", and to respect the research site so as to leave it undisturbed after the study. Before I began the data collection process I sought to obtain letters of permission from the regional office and from the school where the research was to be conducted. I briefed the gatekeeper on the purpose of my research project and the benefits that could accrue, both to the school itself and to the entire ministry of education in Namibia.

After receiving the principal's blessing I met with teachers at the school. Since the study was to be limited to six teachers, these were purposively selected by myself before the interview sessions. I first explained to all the participants relevant issues of protocol and procedure. The aim of explaining these issues was to make the participants aware that they were participating voluntarily and had the right to withdraw from the study whenever they wished. I also described the research process and explained what was expected of them and what they might anticipate (Creswell 2003, p. 64). Before the interview sessions, I entered into an agreement with all my participants by having them sign a contract of consent to take part in the study. The contract also included clauses safeguarding the individual's rights and the confidentiality of the information to be collected (ibid.).

After each interview session the data were safely stored so that no-one but the researcher could gain access to it.

The issue of my being known by some of the teachers was a matter of ethical concern. I dealt with it by pledging the participants to be honest and serious, because otherwise they risked jeopardizing the whole study and the name of the school too.

3.8 Analysis of data

Data analysis is defined by Cantrell (1993, p. 98) as follows:

Analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it down, synthesizing it, searching for pattern, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others.

The researcher organizes data and searches for patterns by identifying similarities and differences, for example, by categorizing responses according to what they have in common. There is no absolute rule as to when one can begin with the analysis of data because, as Creswell (2003, p. 190) argues, the process is not “sharply divided from the other activities of data collection”. Cantrell (1993, p. 98) suggests that “analysis of the data begins during the study”, explaining that the researcher should be constantly thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new and better quality data every day. I started analysing my data the day I began my data collection process. I started by identifying themes and patterns that were emerging from my findings daily, soon after the interview transcribing process. I did this the same day in order to study my findings and know them well. The records from the observation and document review were summarized to supplement the interview data. This helped to confirm the validity of the data obtained from the interviews.

3.9 Limitations of the study

The fact that this is a case study targeting one school and six teachers is in itself an obvious limitation. The findings of this study are strictly speaking non-generalizable, as the phenomenon in question might be differently experienced in other schools in Namibia.

Bearing in mind that I used observation as a data-capturing technique, it is possible that participants behaved differently during the observation from the way they normally behave at school. If this is the case, my findings will be partially compromised.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I described the methodology of my study. I characterized the theoretical orientation of the study, and then described the method and techniques for data collection and analysis. Finally, I considered ethical issues and the limitations of the study.

In the next chapter I present the data.

Chapter Four

Data presentation and analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I attempt to make sense of my findings in relation to my research question and goals.

The study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm of social science research. It sought to examine six teachers' experience of participative management in order to gain insight into how they perceived it.

Data were gathered through various data collection techniques, including semi-structure interviews, observation and document review/analysis. The semi-structured interview was the major data collection technique, followed by observation in relevant contexts of the behaviour of the interviewees. Finally, document analysis captured concrete evidence of people's participation in the management of the school. The latter two data-collection techniques served to complement and supplement the major data collection technique, the interviews.

Sample of major data collection technique, the semi-structured interview:

1. How long have you been teaching at this school?
2. How would you describe participative management at your school?
3. What roles do you play in the management of your school?
4. How would you describe your manager's understanding of participative management?
5. How would you describe a good participative management school?
6. What benefit do you think your school derives from participative management?
7. What challenges do you think are facing participative management at your school?

The six teachers interviewed are identified in the text as R1, R2, R3, R4, R5 and R6. Here are brief sketches of each teacher:

Teacher one (R1) is a young male teacher aged 27. At the time of the interview, he had been a teacher for 3 years and five months. He specializes in mathematic and science Grades 8-10, and English Grades 5-7. He is a member of the school board and serves on other committees in the school.

Teacher two (R2) is a young female teacher aged 23. She has 1 year and 6 months teaching experience. She teaches grade 7 integrated natural science and mathematics. She heads the library committee and serves on other committees in the school.

Teacher three (R3) is a senior female teacher aged 44. She has been in the system for 19 years as a teacher. She is lower primary teacher and serves as a facilitator for the same phase in the school.

Teacher four (R4) is a senior female teacher aged 36. She has been teaching for 13 years as a lower primary teacher in the school. She serves on the feeding programme and lower primary committees at the school.

Teacher five (R5) is a male teacher aged 30. He has been a teacher for five years and six months. He teaches English from grade 5-7 and social studies in the same grades in the school. Apart from teaching he is school board member and serves on the school renovation committee.

Teacher six (R6) is the principal of the school. She is aged 59, with 39 years of teaching experience, including ten years as head of department at another school. She serves as a circuit management team member.

With my research question at the back of my mind I developed the following themes, which serve to structure the remainder of this chapter:

- Strong commitment to participative management
- Committees and teamwork
- Delegation and distributed leadership
- Benefits of participative management
- Challenges of participative management

4.2 Strong commitment to participative management

Findings from the interviews, observations and documents reviewed revealed that morale and confidence among the teachers were high, and that they shared a strong commitment to participative management in the school. Judging from observation and the documents reviewed, the commitment of teachers was shown through their attendance and active participation at meetings. Evidence derives from observation recorded during the staff meeting on 18 July 2007 and previous minutes reviewed on 9 July 2007. For example, one of the interviewees was recorded as saying:

The system that we have is very much open to us, we are not teaching because we are instructed to teach but we are teaching because we have the will to serve our people. (R5)

I would like to say that we are very much great and to have this system of education well monitored as teachers and learners become one person standing together and plan for the future of our people. (R5)

The point of commitment was also argued by respondent 5 when he said: “In this way every one in the school want to understand what is really taking place in the school” (R5).

Parents are committed to visiting the school in order to help teachers in advising the children on matters of school work. One of the respondents felt that this was evidence of the sound and positive relationship between the school and parents, saying: “Quite often parent come and encourage learners to work hard in the school. This relationship shows the positive bond of cooperation between the school and the stakeholders” (R3).

Teachers take initiatives and make decisions in their committee that help members of the department to develop pedagogically. This was confirmed when one of the respondents said in the interview: “We decided as a committee to invite one of the experts from the regional office to come and present how the new lower primary curriculum should be planned and implemented” (R3).

4.2.1 Involvement of stakeholders in the management of the school

All the respondents indicated that there was participative management in the school. Teachers, learners, parents and community group members are involved in various management activities at the school. Stakeholders' participation was also evident at the observed meetings and from the minutes of previous meetings. Observation revealed that teachers attended meetings, participated actively in discussion and in leadership and management roles, for instance as chairperson or secretary of a committee. This was observed on July 11 2007.

Three respondents expressed their satisfaction with the participative approach at the school. They said that it worked well because their voices were recognized in decision making at the school. Their contentment was obvious from their attitudes and responses during the interviews. According to one respondent:

Yap, the participation of teachers and other stakeholders in the school management is good. Teachers are included in the management of the school Teachers are involved in the management of the school because quite often they are asked to give their voice for example on a school budget. The practical example on involvement is that when the school budget gets drafted by the financial committee it has to be brought to the attention of the teachers for review. They have to see to it that what is put in the budget is relevant or may not. They can remove something from the budget or disapprove the whole of it. That's why I am saying teachers are being involved and they have influence in many things in the school. (R1)

The matter of the involvement of stakeholders in school activities was also stressed by respondent two. Here is what he said:

Ok, participative management to my understanding is an involvement of people in the management of the school. Participative management approach in our school is very good. It is good because teachers are participating in the management of the school. To me I could describe it as good. Here people are working together because of this democratic participation prevailing in the school. (R2)

The participation of stakeholders in the running of the school was also viewed as good by respondent six, who indicated the range of participants:

Any way it is good because the way I view it is that it in the school, it is just an involvement of stakeholders in the management of the school. For example stakeholders in our school are teachers, learners, parents, and some community group members. It is really taking place here. Those parties are really involved in the activities of the school. (R6)

Respondent 4 shared the same view as the others on the involvement of stakeholders in the management of the school, but emphasized the commitment of stakeholders to attend meetings and suggest action:

Ok, participative management itself is an involvement of the people in the management of the school. Participative management in our school is very good. It is taking place because teachers and other stakeholders are involved in the management of the school. For example the last school Board committee meeting to recommend a new teachers appointment to the permanent secretary. This meeting reflected the sense of participative as parents and teachers board members were represented. So it was good, all committee member were present, to me it was more participative. (R4)

One of the respondents confirmed that the school includes in the management structure the SRC to represent the voice of the students, thereby adding another dimension of participative management. Concerning this the respondent said:

We have got SRC member represents the voice of the learners in the school. SRC member have to arrange a meeting where student can gather for them to forward their queries or concern to the staff members or to the management of the school. (R5)

This respondent also described how the School Board committee assumed responsibility for school policy. For example, they had recently drafted a policy to guide learners' behaviour in the school.

The other practical example that the School Board committee committed to is ... number one, it was imperative enough for the school to have a clear policy and regulation among the learners, because for the teachers is already clear and well stipulated by the policy of the ministry. Therefore the board has come up with an idea of learners' behaviours regulatory policy in the school. The policy deals with learners' code of conduct in the school. On top of that one of the action was taken by the school board was for setting up of the budget of the school. That has to be monitored by the school board all the time. (R5)

4.3 Committees and teamwork

Management through committees was one of the features repeatedly identified as characteristic of the school under study. All the respondents affirmed in their interviews that the school was being managed through a system of committees. There are in total fourteen committees at the school (review of minutes dated 9 July 2007). The school's management structure is displayed in the staff room as an organ gram, which depicts the various school committees. Committees are run by different teachers with different responsibilities, which again emphasizes the extent of individual teachers' participation in the management of the school. All the committees were described as functional and working well. To confirm the above statement one of the respondents had this to say:

like here in our school we have committees as part of participative management. There are people who are running those committees and they are doing great job. That's how I could tell about participative management in our school I got your question correctly. (R2)

This respondent emphasized the representation of teachers in the important school management committee, which also included the principal and heads of departments:

Of course, teachers are included in the management of the school specifically in the management committee of the school. You see that the management team of this school is formed into teachers. It is actually a group of teachers plus the principal and the head of department (R1).

Two of the six respondents mentioned projects committees that are being run jointly by parents and teachers, a situation which was further developing the role of participative management at the school. One respondent said: "You see, we have project committees in the school. We have projects like Itana which has also a committee in the school" (R2).

This point was corroborated by observation of a school project meeting called for 11 July 2007 and attended by three parents and four teachers.

4.3.1 Examples of committees at the school

There are various committees at the school, several of which were mentioned by the respondents; for instance:

We have various committees of the school for example we have Itana project committee, Library and many others. So we have a lot of committees I can still remember like Ibis project committee, school board committee and we have this subjects committee like life skill and languages. (R2)

I could remember some committees in the school for example Library committee, Ibis project and School Board committees. The School Board is consisting of parents and teachers together. (R3)

....apart from that there are also different committees like library, School Board committee and many other we could not finish them. Teachers and parents are playing different management roles in those committees. That's how I could tell stakeholders involvement in the activities of the school. (R6)

4.3.2 Meetings as features of participative management

Some respondents pointed out that, while meetings seemed to be the distinguishing feature of the committees, in fact they existed to take decisions and coordinate leadership initiatives:

Teachers involve in various committee of the school and they are the one leading those committees. We use to hold committee meeting for example the last committee meeting we had in the school last term. We recommended a new teacher's appointment to the permanent secretary. (R4)

The idea of meetings as a feature of participative management at the school was also evidenced in the documents reviewed during the data collection process. According to the minutes of previous meetings, from September 2006 up until the time of the study, thirty eight meetings were held and recorded. On the evidence of these minutes, the participation of teachers and parents was encouragingly consistent.

Respondent six endorsed this but emphasized joint participative decision making by parents and teachers:

It is a feeding kind of programmer in the school anyway. And it was meant for orphans but in their jointly meeting between parents and the school management it was decided to cater for all learners in the school. (R6)

Respondent five acknowledged the role of emergency meetings in solving urgent problems at the school. The respondent revealed that, while the school has a year plan for activities, if an urgent problem arose a special meeting would be convened to deal with it:

We often call urgent meeting when there is something very urgent in the school but we have a normal year plan for the school. An example of an urgent meeting we had was that, last term board members were called to meet urgently and discuss about the vacant post which occurred when one colleague quit the teaching professional to another professional. We met and decide to advertise the post. (R5)

Respondent three acknowledged the active participation by teachers in the management of the school, and claimed they had particular influence in matters relating to the curriculum and training. She too mentioned the decision making role of committees at the school:

Last term we had meeting to discuss about the new curriculum for the lower primary phase in the school. We decided as a committee to invite one of the curriculum experts from the region to come and present to us in that workshop. It went well. (R3)

4.3.3 Committees facilitate participative management

Respondent six acknowledged that school committees facilitate the smooth running of school management:

You see, we got some committee in the school where different stakeholders are playing their roles for example we have got project that are going on in the school. Parents and teachers are leading those projects. Name of the projects are like Itana project so this one is dealing with orphans in the school. (R6)

One of the respondents pointed to the importance of school committees with regard to the facilitation of participation on the part of the wider community in the activities of the school. For example, respondents acknowledged the critical role of the HIV and

AIDS committee as task force educating and engaging the wider community in campaign activities.

And we have got also the HIV committee in the school. This committee is made up of parents, learners and teachers together. It aims at sensitize the school community to the danger of HIV pandemic. They organize event like campaigning to educate the community about the seriousness of the disease. (R4)

Respondent five acknowledged the essential role played by committees in the management of the school, but singled out the School Board as the key role player in this regard.

Project committees at the school included the Itana project, the Ibis project, and the HIV project. From the minutes of previous meetings of these committees it emerged that most of the projects were spearheaded by teachers. For example, teachers served as secretary and treasurer in one committee, and the involvement of teachers generally appeared positive and extensive.

The success of project committees aside, one of the respondents stressed the importance of the school's being managed through committee work. He stated that committees help staff members to share ideas on matters affecting learning and teaching in the school:

It helps members of the organization to share their knowledge to each other. For example there are also different committees that are being led by teachers only. We are having for example I can give you a sport committee in the school. (R1)

The importance of the committee system was also acknowledged by respondent six. She remarked that it is a good way of involving all the people in the management of the school:

Committees are good to operate with because you can get all the people on the board you know. You can involve all the people in the activities of the school. Everyone is always kept busy in the school and you find that you could accomplish more works in a day. Some committees' members are more expert than you and they do thing creatively. In that way the school will improve more and more. (R6)

On the other hand, committee work “reduces my management workload because some work will be accomplished by other committees in the school” (R6).

4.3.4 Decision-making process at the school

All the respondents remarked that participative decision making was the norm at the school. Some pointed out that participative decision making occurs at different management levels in the school. One suggested that “teachers are included in the management of the school, but most specifically at the level of decision making” (R1). An example of the latter is that when the budget gets drafted teachers have a say in what goes into it:

They can remove something from the budget or disapprove the whole of it. That’s why I am saying teachers are involved and they have influence on many things in the school. (R1)

Teachers’ and learners’ involvement in decision making at the school was also attested to by respondent six, when she said: “Oh not only parents per say, even teachers and learners they should be included mostly in the decision making process of the school” (R6)

One of the respondents argued that parents are being consulted before decisions are taken in the school. Here is what she said:

Maybe there are weaknesses here and there but not that much. They invite meeting and discuss the matter with parent before decision taken. They are monitoring to see if things are taking place as planned. For example we have Itana project where all parents with learners were asked to contribute 1kg of mahangu flour. The project is there as an orphan feeding programmer in the school but finally the school management together with parents decided to make it for all kids in the school. (R2)

Two of the respondents acknowledged that, while there were other committees making important decisions, the School Board was the highest decision-making body at the school and was the most powerful; as one put it:

The most important committee we have got in the school is the School Board which is high decision making body in the school. The school Board has got all the power of the school more especial in case of decision making process as I said before. (R4)

One of the respondents felt that the School Board seemed to own power in the school as its members were responsible for making school policy and appointing employees:

The school board has got all the power of the school more especial in case of decision making process. (R5)

And the practical example is that, number one it was imperative enough for the school to have clear police on rules and regulation among learners because for the teachers is already clear and well stipulated by the policy of the ministry. Therefore the board has come up with an idea on how learners should learners behavior should be monitored and how they should be dealt with in terms of their misbehaviors. On top of that one decision that was taken by the board was for setting up the budget of the school. That has to be monitored by the school board all the time. (R5)

One of the six respondents recognized the representation of learners in the decision making process at the school:

In this we have got SRC members represent the voice of learners in the school. Members of the SRC have to arrange a special meeting with other and discuss their own concerned than forward their queries to the staff members concern or to the management of the school. (R5)

In addition, respondent six acknowledged the representation of parents in decision making at the school. While parents were not needed in all decision making, they were represented on the School Board: “I said this in terms of the School Board as a mouth piece of all parent and as a high decision making body in the school” (R6).

The recognition of parents and other community groups in specific decision making processes at the school was also acknowledged:

Not only learners but also some time we have to make regular meetings with the entire school community including community activist groups to share their ideas on decision to be taken in the school when their contribution is really needed. (R5).

4.4 Delegation and distributed leadership in the school

Delegation and leadership distribution emerged as playing a major role in the management of the school under investigation. That teachers played a variety of leadership and management roles in the school was indicated by the respondents in their interviews. The element of delegation and leadership distribution was also apparent in my observation and in documents reviewed. In my observation dated 20 July 2007 I record an instance of a young male teacher representing the principal at one of the month-end meetings. As a comparable instance of leadership distribution, I have notes of a project meeting led by a female teacher (11 July 2007).

All six respondents acknowledged that they played a role in the management of the school and enjoyed some kind of leadership position. And they expressed their sense of satisfaction with their position and roles. One of the respondents mentioned that he was secretary to one of the committees in the school:

Myself, I am serving in a feeding programme. That one is a newly established project in the school. I am there as a secretary. On top of that I am also a secretary to the school board. That's all but no, no, I forget ... I am a mathematics subject head in the school again. My function as a secretary is just to take minute for the meeting. As a subject head my work is to organize and facilitate workshop. In committee we also make decision about our activities. That is my role in the management of the school. Anyway I am enjoying my work. (R1)

Respondent two described her role in the management of the school as chairperson of one of the committees:

Okay my role in the management of the school; I am the chairperson of the library committee. And I am also a life skill subject head in the school. Basically, my role as chair and as a subject head is nothing else rather to call up a subject meetings or conducting meetings. Meet with life skill teachers and share problem pertain teaching issue in the school. In the library committee is more all less the same just to invite meeting to discuss pertains issue the library operation. That is my role in the management of the school apart from teaching. (R2)

Respondent three discussed her role in the management of the school in similar terms. Although she does not hold any formal position in management, she is a co-opted member of most of the committees within the school. Here is what she said:

I am an Ibis co-opted committee member in the school. In the committee, we organize activities such as workshop to train teachers or member on new development within the school. We also take decision within our committee. For example last term we had training on a new curriculum for the lower primary phase. The aim was just to keep our colleague up-t-date with regard to the new curriculum. We decided as a committee to invite one of the curriculum experts from the region to come and present to us. (R3)

Similarly, respondent four participates in school management although he does not hold any formal position. He felt that his role as a committee member was to contribute to discussion at meetings:

My role is just to attend meetings and contribute to the discussion matter. We also plan activities like year plan and action plan. You see in am also a disciplinary committee member of the school. In this committee we make decision on learner disciplinary measures. That's all about my role apart from teaching my learners (R4).

Respondent five echoed the point. He revealed that as a member of the school management team his role was just to attend meetings and contribute to the discussion:

Basically I am a school management team member and apart from being a school management member I am serving in a renovation committee. I am just an additional member in both committees, nothing else. Ok, we often call meeting when there is something very urgent in the school but we have the normal year plan of our committee activities. That's all what I can say about my role in the management of the school. (R5)

One of the respondents acknowledged the importance of ministerial policy as a guiding principle in the management of the school. She said that as head of the institution she adhered to ministerial policy in whatever she was doing: the school was a public institution and hence had to be run within the framework of government policy:

What I do mostly is that I have to be clear in what I am doing and I always stick to the ministerial policies. Those are my guiding document where I am always hanging myself. ... As a school head you have to follow the government document what else you can do. If a person does not want to cooperate with the school ground rules, what you can do is just to refer that person to one of that government document, that's all what I could do. (R6)

4.5 Benefits of participative management to school

4.5.1 Develops teachers' management and leadership skills

All six respondents alleged that participative management had been of enormous benefit to the school. One of the respondents stated that participative management develops teachers' management skills, which they can use when they themselves become leaders. The respondent had this to say:

Ok, I can say that this system of participative leadership is quite benefiting especial to the teachers, because teachers can get knowledge of how to deal with the management of the school. They can get knowledge and they can use their knowledge even tomorrow, they will find themselves principal. And it also shows that teachers are valued in the school. When a teacher delegated he/she will see that he/she valued in the school. Teachers are Valued in term of capacity. Some teachers may feel that no I am just an ordinary teacher they want to write a report they are delegated to write for example because they see that they/ she is valued in the capacity of the work she did. She/he will feel that she is a staff member who can able to manage the school. It gives and encourages teachers to work hard and also to participate free in the activities of the school. It also contributes to the growth of the school. (R1)

Respondent two acknowledged participative management as promoting and encouraging unity and democratic participation in the school:

Participative has more benefit more especial in schools. It promotes unity in the school. It encourages organization members to involve in the management of the school as it is characterized by the notion of democracy. (R2)

Respondent four expressed similar sentiments, saying that participative management encourages teamwork in the school:

Well, participative has more advantage like in our school. It enables stakeholders to work as a team. People are working together just because of this democratic participation prevails in the school. It encourages and fosters positive relationship among the people of the organization. What I would like to say here is that this kind of leadership approach can also bring about collective decision in the school. When people are working together in a mutual understanding they tend to make quality decision as to each

decision they have reach a certain consensus. All participants feel comfortable with the decision made. (R4)

4.5.2 Improve academic results in the school

According to some of the respondents, an improvement in academic results was one of the benefits resulting from participative management at the school. One respondent put it like this:

Yes, participative management can result in good academic result of the school in terms of performance. It promote co-operation among the people in the organization. For example quite often parents come and encourage learners to work hard in the school. This relationship shows the positive bond of cooperation between the school and the stakeholders. (R3)

Respondent six also suggested that improved academic performance could be a result of participative management in the school:

Ok, as I said earlier that there are some benefits that one can not really recognize when they are taking place. So, there are a lot of benefits but I can start with academic improvement although it is an indirect benefit. The school will improve in term of result as learners may pass if they are well prepared. When we are here, teaching and learning is our core function all endeavors we are making up here are for our learners to succeed in their learning. (R6)

4.5.3 Encourages teamwork

Participative management has introduced or enhanced a team spirit among the staff members in the school. And as pointed out earlier, it serves to reduce the principal's work load because management work is undertaken by school committees (R6), and this too is good for morale.

4.5.4 Encourages staff members to work hard

And another benefit I could mention is that it is encouraging staff member to be committed to their work as they are helping one another. It also promotes collective decision because all people are taking part and support it in a group is a one person thing. (R6)

4.5.5 Promotes a sense of ownership and confidence among staff members

A sense of ownership and confidence in the decision-making process were identified as the results of participative management at the school. Participative management also discourages the formation of potentially disruptive informal groups in the organization. According to a respondent,

Alright I like the question, now once the staff members, parents and learners are taking part in the action or in decision making it makes them feel happy. And they feel ownership of that decision they take. So participative management promotes collective effort among stakeholders of the school. ... Participative management discourage informal grouping in the school. These are groups that emerge in an organization and tend to destroy good relationship among workers. It enables managers to delegate task to their organizational members because when people working in a collaborative they are able to share their responsibilities. In addition I would like to say that we are very much great that we got education system which is will monitored as teachers and learners became one person standing together and plan for the future of our people. Now the system that we have is very much open to us, even you are teaching you are not teaching because you are instructed to teach, but you are teaching because you have the will to serve your people. (R6)

4.6 Challenges of participative management

All six respondents recognized that participative management faced a number of challenges.

4.6.1 Perceived lack of readiness of management

Respondents had varying perceptions of management in the school. Some perceived the managers to be “old”, while others rated them as “good”. According to one respondent,

Oyo! The understanding of my manager is ok; I can describe it at average level. What I mean is like, things are like changing from old to new as you know that, this one is a one of the old managers for example she is just left with one year and some months to be a pensioner. Actually they are

adapting to the new change but the understanding of participative is little bit poor in them because they are coming from that issue of being alone in the leadership. So now they are struggling to cope up with the situation. (R1)

Another respondent had a contrary view, describing the school's managers as good, especially in so far as they involved others in the management activities of the school. Here is what she said:

To my own observation and I think they are good more especially the way they involve teachers in the management of the school. May be there are weaknesses here and there but to me is not that much. They involve other in the committee of the school. For example we have Itana project where all parents with learners are schooling here were asked to contribute 1kg of Mahangu flour. To give you a practical example on this I am serving in a school renovation committee the other time we decide to order bricks to renovate the school library when the bricks were delivered they were of poor quality we decided as a committee to turn the offer down. The principal said no we must accept the bricks. What else we could have done we accept those poor quality bricks. Anyway our managers are good in some other things not in everything in the school, because they tend to dominate other in the decision making. School managers need training on how to manage their institution in a participatory practice. (R2)

One respondent alleged that managers were unwilling to accept advice from younger teachers, and tended to dominate the decision-making process:

Well, their understanding is a bit okay but they still need more understanding because they sometime do not want to take advices from their staff members and sometime they tend to dominate young teachers with their old management practice. You see they do not want to change from that old style of leadership. For example sometime imagine you agree on something as a group but you find that because the person is on top and have the power he/she will change the whole thing to him/ her. (R3)

Respondent four agreed, though she felt that the understanding and judgment of school managers was only poor in some areas of management. She continued:

I describe it as somehow well but they need training because you know that this approach is very new to them. So they are trying their level as they are involving other in the decision making of the school. Anyway they are encouraging other to participate in the management of the school. For example managers assign some of the management to individual teachers for accomplishment. It is a good management development I can see on them. (R4)

Respondent five agreed with respondents three and respondent four that managers' openness was limited, and suggested that they would benefit from a workshop on the participatory approach. This respondent argued that managers tended to be autocratic on occasion, forcing their decisions on people:

Well! They are good but they need a workshop on this type of approach. This is a democratic kind of leadership style. It requires managers understanding with regard to the principle of democracy. I observed some kind of autocratic in their management. There are times that they agree at the same decision but later they would make their own decision again. That's why I am saying they understand better but much need to be done for them to improve more. (R5)

4.6.2 Abusing of democratic rights by staff members at the school

The misunderstanding and abuse of their "democratic rights" was identified as a growing culture among the staff members of the school.

One of the respondents remarked that teachers abused their rights by misbehaving and refusing to obey the rules on the ground. The respondent put it like this:

Yap ... anyway some do understand the approach and they are doing great but some wants to abuse it. Aha ... you see, sometime if people are given freedom of speech they tend to abuse it. Even where it is not needed they can do it you as a principal have got nothing to do. This is a democratic country. What I mean here is that there are those teachers who are misbehaving by denying some rules on the ground. I do not want to mention that who are those teachers but they are in this school. Anyway it is their democratic right but we need to have a limit on our right more importantly on rules that put for all people in the school. We have to abide to those regulations that put for us in the school. (R6)

4.6.3 Resistance to change

Resistance to change was one of the challenges identified as hindering the full participation of stakeholders in the management of the school. Two of the respondents stated that traditional management practice leads to resistance to change among the

teachers and managers. “Old” practices sustained by some teachers seemed to stand in the way of the smooth running of participative management in the school. Here is what they said:

You see, the challenge is just resistance to change. Here I mean leaders might feel uncomfortable to delegate his/her duty to capable staff member, with the fear that his/her job will be taken up and lose his position as a principal or as who ever. (R1)

The challenge to participative is that old teachers do not want to leave the old management practice and teaching as well. They are still applying such practice in the school. (R3)

4.6.4 Autocracy, domination and selfishness among school leaders

Autocratic domination and selfishness on the part of management at the school were identified as seriously hampering the participation of all stakeholders in the management of the school. One of the respondents alleged that management was at times autocratic and domineering in decision making, which negatively affected relationships in the school. Here is what he said:

Another problem is that manager of the school do not to take advice from the young teachers in the school. They often dominate young teachers in the decision making more especial in the school. ... Selfishness among school leaders is a problem as they do not want to share their leadership responsibilities with others in the school. This means that autocratic by some of the managers in the school is blocking the smooth running of the school. (R3)

4.6.5 Laziness and unwillingness among staff members

Staff members’ laziness and unwillingness to participate were identified as factors inhibiting the development of a culture of participative management at the school. As one respondent said,

Other challenge is laziness among the staff. May be some teachers can be delegated but they are lazy that they cannot do the work they were delegated to do then the work will be dropped down. (R1)

One of the respondents claimed that some teachers refused to take on management responsibilities, especially finance-related responsibilities, because they were scared of being accused of stealing:

Like I mention earlier we use to experience problem of people refusing to be given responsibilities in the school for example we had a problem last time where teachers refused to take a responsibility of being a financial treasure of the school, so it was a very a very big problem in the school. The reason was it because people were afraid to be accused of stealing money in the school. It happened once in the school whereby money went missing. So, now people don't like to serving in those management position in the school. In those situation teacher are scared to be pointed fingers if get missing again. (R2)

4.6.6 Little understanding of participative management among parents

A lack of understanding is one of the challenges faced by participative management at the school. Two respondents indicated that parents did not really understand the value of participating in the management of the school. One of the respondents had this to say:

The problem hindering the smooth running of participative management in the school is the level of understanding among parents and the community with regard to the value of education. Poor understanding among parent with regard to the value of education leads to their poor participation in the management of the school. (R5)

Respondent six voiced a similar reservation:

there are lot of problem facing this kind of management approach first all people do not understand how does it work, and my self maybe I do not understand it really. Parents and the community at large need to be made to understand about the value of their participation in the management of the school. (R6)

4.6.7 Conflict of interest

Conflict of interest among the staff members was seen as a problem facing participative management at the school. One of the respondents stressed that if there

was a serious conflict of interest within the management of the school then participative decision making was undermined:

What I would say is only that when there is a conflict of interest in an organization then we should forget about participative management. I can also mention biasness in decision making; it can also hamper the smooth running of participative management in the school. If school leaders are not treating other fairly and equal then we expect biasness in the management function of the school. (R5)

4.6.8 The system is too much open

The openness of the system and the freedom enjoyed by staff members was seen as posing a challenge to the management of the school:

The second thing is that this system gives too much freedom or room to people which may sometime results in a conflict of the school. Sometimes people tend to abuse this as I said earlier. (R6)

Openness rendered the system fragile because it allowed individuals to make decisions on behalf of the school that actually benefited themselves. To support this allegation, the respondent said:

The other one, the system is more open that some of the individual now are trying to divert the benefit of the school into their own interest. As a principal you are just a facilitator you are not exactly someone who has to force decision to people. If teachers do not want that decision no matter they feel like benefiting but it is not suiting them because of ABC they will not take it. ... The system is more democratic one you do not need to force anyone. Sometimes they have got those facts of saying like if teachers ABC is not comfortable with the decision me also will not follow that decision. As a principal you do not need to demand but you need. (R6)

4.6.9 The need for participative management training

The need for training was one of the challenges facing the participative management approach in schools. According to one respondent,

There are numbers of reasons to this like some of the staff members' lacks of training skill and some do not have knowledge of how participative management should works. (R5)

The need for training was also acknowledged by respondent six, who said:

it is a very good question; really what I will suggest is that we need training about this approach. We need expertise of the field to come and give us even a three days workshop with my teachers and parents too. (R6)

4.6.10 The danger of HIV and AIDS

The presence of HIV and AIDS was acknowledged to be a big threat to the participative management approach at the school. Two of the respondents indicated in their interviews that to some extent the poor participation of parents and teachers in school activities is a result of the disease, which is prevalent in the community:

The other problem facing participative management approach in schools is the dreadful disease the so called "HIV" epidemic. Mostly school are facing poor participation among stakeholders because of this of the disease. This is a serious problem to the system of education. (R5)

The problem of HIV and AIDS was also mentioned by respondent six as a challenge to participative management. Here is what the respondent said:

The other thing is the issue of the pandemic (HIV), most people could be teachers, learners and parent are poorly in most school activities due to that dreadful diseases. (R6)

4.7 Overview

What has emerged is a generally positive picture of teachers committed to participative management in the school under study. Participative management is evident in the structure and functions of committees in the school. But while there is an overall tendency towards shared decision-making, numerous challenges in the way of the full implementation of participative management have been identified.

Chapter Five

Data discussion and interpretation

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented and analysed my data. In this chapter I discuss and interpret the data in terms of issues that emerged in the course of the presentation and analysis.

As a result of triangulating my data collection via interview, observation and document review, I obtained a large amount of material covering a number of issues. Screening and filtering these issues enabled me to develop five main themes:

- * Teachers committed to participative management in the school.
- * Participative management evident in committee structures and function.
- * Shared decision making prevails in the school.
- * Leadership development in the school.
- * Challenges faced by participative management in the school.

5.2 Discussion of data

5.2.1 Teachers committed to participative management in the school

5.2.1.1 Confidence, independence, openness, and hard work

A culture of commitment to working hard among staff members appeared to be a prominent result of participative management at the school. This commitment was evidenced in the spirit of confidence, openness, independence, and diligence among the respondents. Sergiovanni (2007, p. 77) argues that when teachers feel comfortable with the system of management in place, they show “commitment to their work, ownership and a sense of pride” in their work place.

The respondents displayed confidence, a hard-working spirit and a commitment to participate in school activities. As one respondent put it, in an atmosphere conducive to individual effort, teachers are not forced to work but do so in order to help develop the school community (Chapter 4.1).

The respondents also expressed their appreciation of being free to do their work without fear or inhibition, and demonstrated a reciprocal spirit of being loving and caring in carrying out their responsibilities to the school. Horgan (in Kawana 2004, p. 52) defines commitment as a “passion of caring” that a person upholds towards the work he/she is doing in an organization. In this case the participative culture in the school encourages and instils in teachers a spirit of diligence and a desire to help both each other and the school community as a whole.

The respondents emphasized the role of the participative system in promoting unity in the school. They viewed teachers, learners and parents as a single grouping, standing together and planning for the future of the people. It is therefore fair to say that a spirit of collegiality prevails in the institution (Bush 2003, p. 64). Bush maintains that this spirit engenders a greater mutual trust and willingness to work. In this way the level of commitment in the school community as a whole is raised. This commitment was shown both in the high morale of the teachers and in their active attendance and participation in meetings and other school activities.

Meetings at the school appeared to take place in a warm and relaxed atmosphere, in which all the teachers enjoyed the opportunity to air their views on matters affecting their work. This reflects the practice of participative management at the school (see Bush 2003, p. 62). In collegial institutions teachers attend meetings and talk about matters relating to their teaching practice and professional lives. In such an environment, people are working as a team toward common goals (Bush 2003, p. 62).

My respondents demonstrated their understanding that a participatory management environment is a kind of open working environment. An open organization allows teachers to display their talents in an open way. The respondents felt that they were free to do their work and contribute as best they could, and were being recognized for

doing this. In his study of Australian high schools, Stevenson found openness to be a characteristic of the site-based managed school (2001, p. 107). In an open organization, people share ideas and help one another; for example, “teachers help one another in their lesson planning” (Stevenson 2001, p. 107). Such mutuality is clearly an instance of participative practice.

In a participatory management school, teachers work together in a friendly atmosphere and are open to and with one another. Tourish and Hargie (2000, p. 120) argue that a friendly environment encourages a spirit of openness and relaxation among staff members, which conduces to their enjoying freedom of choice concerning what they might contribute to the development of the school. The element of freedom of choice among staff members is an aspect of the democratic participation by all stakeholders that for Bush is integral to participative management (2003, p. 71).

In a participative leadership school, free and equal participation is granted to all stakeholders in the making of decisions. Such participation generally leads to a high level of commitment among the stakeholders. And commitment among stakeholders at the level of school management should produce positive results in terms of school performance. By the same token, this commitment can only be achieved through the active involvement of all members of the school organization in the realization of its mission (South Africa, Task Team Report 1996, p. 30). To have teachers, learners and parents working together and actively participating in the management activities of the school is a sign of the highest commitment.

5.2.1.2 Parents’ joint venture with teachers in school work

Respondents remarked on parental involvement in teaching-related activities, which they saw as an instance of participative management at the school. One respondent was quoted (chapter 4.1) as saying that, “in this way everyone in the school wants to understand what is really taking place in the school”. The respondent felt that, as stakeholders, parents showed their concern by involving themselves in activities aimed at bringing about development in the school. In this way they evinced a

commitment to participative management in the school. The involvement of parents in teaching and learning is one of the signs of “teamwork” for Walker (1994, pp. 38-44; see Chapter 2). Walker argues that “teamwork and collaboration in the school” can bring real benefits to teachers and learners. He believes that school improvement cannot come by itself, with teachers working in isolation, but rather as a consequence of joint effort on the part of the stakeholders. Teachers and parents need to collaborate to improve the performance of children in school. Walker cautions schools to adopt fundamental values expressive of a culture of openness, trust and participation among stakeholders. This will help to ensure effective management in a school.

My respondents acknowledged the endeavours of parents in visiting the school and helping teachers to motivate children to do their school work. Parents were sometimes to be seen in the school, walking in classrooms and talking to learners, motivating and encouraging them to take their education more seriously. In this way parents showed their concern with what was happening in the classrooms and expressed their desire to help teachers to motivate their learners. This suggests that the school is, organizationally speaking, what Rowan calls an open system (in Hoy and Miskel 1996, p. 290). Rowan views the school as an open organization that depends on the outside environment for survival. The school under investigation in this study interacts in a healthy way, through the contribution of parents, with the outside environment. The involvement of parents substantiates the argument of Kachan and Reed (2005, p. 72) in my literature chapter. Kachan and Reed maintain that the involvement and engagement of the whole school community in management activities must inevitably make an enormous contribution to the development of the school. They believe that if teachers, learners and parents work together in a cooperative manner the standard of performance in a school will improve tremendously. This point is also made by Bezzina (1997, p. 199), who argues that in a site-based managed school, teachers and parents are encouraged and empowered to enhance the effectiveness of management and improve learners’ performance. This reflects a strong and positive bond between the school and the community.

This notion of a bond is similar to the element of partnership suggested in the Namibia Education Act, no. 16 of 2001. The Namibia Education Act calls on all teachers (educators) to establish partnerships between their schools and parents in the

community. It also urges teachers to strive for healthy relationships and positive communication in the school (Namibia Education Act, no. 16 of 2001). This echoes the findings of the Task Team (1996, p. 27). The Task Team reported that a new education management strategy was required that included the participation of all stakeholders. Thus it is that the Namibian education policy calls for broader participation by the all stakeholders in education, to the extent that management is no longer seen as the responsibility of a few people in the school (MEC, 1993). In other words, schools should be run according to a participative management approach.

5.2.2 Structural elements

5.2.2.1 Participative management through committees

Any organization can “design a structure” for efficient and effective management (Blandford, 1997, p. 44). Structurally speaking, a school should have a number of working groups for it to practise effective participative management.

The findings of the study identified committees as the main structural feature of participative management in the school. This was clearly evidenced by the organ gram in which all the school committees – fourteen in number – are displayed. Most of the respondents referred to the committee system, which appears to have most of the features of Bush’s collegial model (Bush 2003, p. 74). In collegial institutions all the stakeholders are encouraged to work together as a team and participate in the management of the school. In the school under investigation, management is undoubtedly driven by the committees and their task forces, pursuing the same educational goals. That this is an essentially collegial system is underlined by the mood of togetherness that prevails at the school.

The respondents saw the committee system as a lens which focused the participative aspect of management practices at the school: the involvement of all stakeholders in school management is clearly seen in their committee service. Certain committees were allocated specific management tasks, for example, each subject department in the school has its own management task to accomplish. The idea of assigning each

committee with a management task suggests distributed leadership, as described by Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 30). School departments are headed by competent staff members in particular subject areas, but run as committees with representation from the other teachers (Harris and Muijs 2005, p. 30). The idea of department creation in the school ties in with what Gonn calls “leadership spread over the organization members” (Gonn in Harris and Muijs 2005, p. 30). Gonn explains the advantage of several people sharing their experience and expertise within the designated departments. All in all, the purpose of committees in schools is to help people to work together as a team, because a teamwork structure will ensure effective management practice in a school.

It was interesting to hear that students were included in the school’s management structure. The respondents regarded this as consonant with consistent participative management practice in the school. The inclusion of students in the management structure reflects a commitment to democratic principles.

Some writers emphasize the need for and significance of committee structures in schools by arguing that committee structures are crucial in any organization, whether private or public. The purpose of committees is to make the management task easier by sharing it among different groups within the organization. Walker (1994, p. 38) argues the need for committees and teamwork as follows:

In exercising authority, nowadays principal are surrounded with Management workload and this also the same thing happening in the public sectors and private as well thus there is a need of appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders. And much of the planning needs to be carried out at management level and among staff in their area of interest in the school. (p. 38)

Walker thus believes that teamwork is crucial in the management of institutions in general. More pertinently, he maintains that in Australia the committee system has proved to be the most effective method of managing schools (Walker 1994, p. 38).

My respondents regarded the committee system as a way of accessing the whole school community to assist in the management and government of the school: committees helped to get everyone on board, as one respondent put it during the

interview (Chapter 4.2.3). They also felt that the more management expected of committees, the more various the tasks they were required to perform, the more they would achieve. One respondent, in acknowledging the importance of the committee system, suggested that it cut down on the time consumed by administrative activity, or at least spread the burden more equitably and gave the principal some relief.

Besides committees concerned with administrative matters, there were also projects going on in the school in which parents and teachers were playing very important management roles. The existence of projects committees added another dimension to participative management practice in the school. The respondents commended their school for these brave initiatives. The HIV committee, for instance, was assisting and encouraging the whole community to participate in both the management of the school and the welfare of the children more generally.

5.2.2.2 The School Board as the highest decision-making body in the school

My respondents acknowledged the importance of the School Board committee. The School Board committee was the highest decision-making body at the school and the umbrella committee under which all the other committees operated. The School Board committee set a shining example of participative management as all the stakeholders in the school are represented on it.

That the School Board is the highest decision-making body at the school is consistent with the Namibia Education Act (no. 16 of 2001), which requires that all decisions taken be endorsed by the school governing body or School Board. All the committees in the school revolve around and report to the School Board. One respondent even opined that the School Board monopolized power in the school, especially when it came to the policy decision-making process (Chapter Four, 4.2.4). But since the body was fully representative, this did not amount to an abuse of power.

5.2.2.3 Meetings as participative management process

The meeting is crucial in any organization that aspires to practise participative management. The meeting is defined as “a vehicle for giving and receiving information” and “airing views in order to take decisions” (Everard K. B, Geoffrey, M., Wilson I. 2004, p. 59). This observation corroborates my findings on the importance of meetings at the school under investigation. The meeting was the chief mechanism of the participatory management process. Meetings were seen as a good platform for the participation of all staff members in the life of the school, and were democratically conducted. Participants were observed actively contributing to the discussion and debate during meetings. These would be what Blandford (1997, p. 63) characterized as “good” meetings, displaying the “features of democratic participation of members” and a “sense of involvement and ownership” among the participants.

Meetings at the school being studied had much in common with those described by Spillane (in Harris and 2005, p. 39) in my literature chapter. Spillane discusses the meetings of a literacy committee at Adam primary school, showing how people brought to the discussion an enriching range of different ideas, skills and experience. It stands to reason that the principal alone cannot have a solution to all the problems faced by the school, and the more varied the information and advice he or she receives, the better.

Respondents indicated that in committee meetings teachers made decisions relating to their teaching in the school. They felt that this was a direct and transparent example of participative management because everyone was involved in the activity and aware of what was happening in the committee. The idea of involving every person in the management of the school is what Bush calls broad or horizontal participation (Bush 2003, p. 74). Horizontal participation was approved by the respondents on the ground that it enabled the admission of creative and innovative ideas which would inevitably benefit the children and the entire school community. As one respondent said, “Sometimes committee members are more expert than you and they do thing creatively. In this way the school will improve more and more” (Chapter Four, 4.2.3).

5.2.3 The decision-making process in the school

Decision making at the school under investigation was described by respondents as being collective and consultative in nature. The decision-making process was perceived as a joint and communal responsibility.

5.2.3.1 Collective decision making

The respondents reported in the interviews that participative decision making was being applied at different management levels in the school. They indicated that decisions were being reached by consensus and implemented by committees and other bodies. An example of a decision made at the committee level was the renovations and construction committee's decision to order bricks for the construction of a new library at the school (Chapter 4.2.4). The spirit of collective decision making in the school evidenced the participative democratic model of leadership (Bush 2003, p. 78), a model based on "the principle of democratic participation by all stakeholders in the school".

Teachers in the school were reported as being mandated with the power to reject any decision perceived to be detrimental to teaching and learning in the school. This evidences respect for the authority of the expert, a feature of the collegial model as described by Bush (2003, p. 74).

There was also often consultation before decisions were taken, for example in the Itana project. In this case the management of the school and parents met together and decided that each parent should donate 1kg of mahangu flour in order to sustain the project. This evidenced both democratic participation in the management of the school and the spirit of collegial cooperation.

Stevenson (2001, p. 103) explains that collective decisions are "decisions reached through agreement" by all participants in the decision-making process. Stevenson maintains that everyone involved should feel part of the process and therefore be

satisfied with the outcome or decision. This satisfaction could serve as an indicator of the “collectiveness” of a decision taken.

Bezzina (2000 p. 300) links shared decision making to the context of the site-based managed school. In this context people need to have their “voices heard in the decision-making process”. Teachers, learners, parents and interested groups in the community need to be accorded a chance to participate in the decision-making process in the school. Bezzina explains that involving people in the decision-making process instils a culture of “ownership of decisions” among them. People accept responsibility for the decision made and accept the outcome of its implementation (Bezzina 2000, p. 300). This is hugely important because, as Hoy and Miskel (1996, p. 290) point out, decisions in most organizations tend to “fail because of poor quality or because they were not accepted by all subordinates”. Hoy and Miskel argue that in a shared management organization, decisions are agreed upon by all stakeholders for effective implementation and quality outcomes. Collective or shared decision making, as an aspect of participative management, is therefore both empowering for those involved and efficient for the organization.

5.2.3.2 Consultation prior to decision making

Respondents noted that the decision-making process in the school was characterized by “consultation”: staff members and parents were consulted before any decision was taken. The respondents felt that consultation was critical because the school was owned not by one person but by many. This resonates with Bezzina’s insistence (2000, p. 300) that it is important to consult and include parents in decision making at a school. Parents are part of the larger community of the school, and including them helps to make the school community a more real and concrete thing. The community and the school enjoy a relationship of mutual obligation and the system of participative management recognizes this.

The respondents explained that consultation with stakeholders occurred in meetings, for example parents were consulted in parent-teacher meetings. At such meetings the parents or teachers would be briefed about the proposed decision before their views and input were solicited. Respondents referred to the activeness and openness of

stakeholders in debating proposed decisions during such meetings. They further noted that such meetings were invariably held in a positive and good-humoured atmosphere.

Respondents also referred to the participation of interested groups in the decision-making process at the school. They felt that the inclusion of activist groups was a good thing because they contributed enthusiasm and momentum, while at the same time remaining “on board” and not antagonistic. To include interested groups would be evidence of an “open system” as described by Brian and Roan (in Hoy and Miskel 1996, p. 203). Their open system theory emphasises the need for organizations to be open to their outside environment and to other organizations within their surrounding areas, so as to develop, innovate and – ultimately – survive.

5.2.3.4 Recognition of students’ voice

Respondents were glad that students were involved in decisions relating to their learning and wellbeing at the school. They felt that this both showed that children were valued and demonstrated respect for their status and rights. In Namibia, children have the constitutional right to participate in matters pertaining to their education (Namibia, the Constitution of the Republic, Article 20). But the representation of children in the management of schools is increasingly a world-wide phenomenon. Wood P. A. (2005, p. 29) argues that:

There is increased interest, too, in the importance and value of student voice and participation, even in the relation to early year’s education, some countries, such as those in Scandinavia have a policy history that has prioritized the promotion of democratic principle in education. In the UK some way the climate for student voice and participation has never been better. For the first time ever legislation passed by the parliament has been put into place to ensure that children and young people view and voice listened and taken seriously in the school. (p. 29)

The notion of respecting the rights of children is consistent with the argument of Stevenson (2001, p. 103) in my literature chapter. Stevenson stresses that all stakeholders have equal rights and are entitled to participate in decisions affecting them within the organization, and children are arguably the most important stakeholders in the school. Respondents also felt that the participation of students would conduce to the development of their leadership abilities.

5.2.4 Leadership development in the school

5.2.4.1 Committees' functions influencing participative leadership development in the school

My respondents indicated that school committees were headed by both teachers and parents. This seems to conform to Bush's idea of participative leadership – that in a site-based management context, leadership should be exercised by all legitimate members of the organization (Bush 2003, p. 78). In other words, in a self-managing or site-based management school, leadership is a shared responsibility: everyone can be a leader.

Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 30) argue that assigning people different management roles is a way of building leadership and management capacity which eventually will improve overall performance within the school. The committee system in the school under investigation is also consistent with what Spillane (cited in Coles and Southworth 2005, p. 38) calls the “spread over and stretch over” leadership policy. Spillane means that responsibilities should be delegated or shared: the school is owned by many people, and hence leadership and management activities should be distributed among the school community (Spillane in Coles and Southworth 2005, p. 38). This means that leadership activities in the school fall under the control of various leaders. The allocation of leadership and management activities to different people is clearly another way of promoting and developing participative management within the school.

Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 12) argue that this is in any case becoming increasingly necessary as leadership and management responsibilities in schools become more complex and multifaceted. The principal is often no longer able to handle the burden alone, and actually requires the involvement of the wider school community (Bush and Middlewood 2005, p. 12). Broader participation by all stakeholders is also championed in MBEC (1993) because it fosters “unity, effective

collegial communication and a shared management culture and administration” among those responsible for managing the national education system (MBEC 1993, p. 21). At the same time, participative leadership development is taking place among the stakeholders in the school.

Various aspects of leadership development in the school under investigation were noted. My findings revealed that leadership development pertained to all stakeholders from learners in the SRC to teachers on committees. There was clear evidence of what could be described as a transformational leadership approach, since the principal encouraged both students and staff members to assume leadership roles (see Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach in Bush, 2003, p. 77).

My findings revealed that teachers were engaged in leadership development in chairing meetings, heading committees, and in occupying secretariat positions in meetings and subject head positions in the school. These findings revealed evidence of team management (Walker 1994, p. 40). Teamwork organizations are composed of various working groups and each group is linked to the others through appointed chairpersons, coordinators and subject heads. The role of the group leader is to make sure that the group has adequate resources to perform its management functions. To have teachers serve as group leaders is another way of developing their leadership potential.

These findings once again displayed features of the distributed leadership approach (Harris and Muijs 2005, p. 29). Distributed leadership emphasizes building capacity within the school by developing teachers’ leadership abilities. Delegation was a key aspect of the teacher leadership development process. Delegation is performed by an “educational leader” in “entrusting duties” to members of his or her staff (Westhuizen 1991, p. 172). For Bush (2003, p. 97), “delegation” is a way of helping “competent staff members” to meet the school’s needs creatively. I am reminded of one of my respondents’ answers in the interview, to the effect that “competent teachers” in the school were delegated to represent the principal at various management meetings. Clearly, representing management is not a role for which every staff member is equipped.

Delegation is a feature of site-based management (Stevenson 2001, p. 107). Stevenson points out that in a site-based managed school, teachers are encouraged to represent the school and the principal in various contexts, for example at meetings and workshops happening outside the school. He views this as an “empowering” way of developing teachers’ leadership skills.

My respondents further reported that the school principal delegated to teachers the management or monitoring of other teachers’ work. For example, it was noted that teachers were sometimes delegated to vet other teachers’ lesson plans. This was another instance of leadership development in the school. Some regard the delegation of management tasks in the school as a form of “in-service training” for teachers (Van der Westhuizen 1991, p. 172). Teachers are being prepared to assume greater responsibility and to work independently. Van der Westhuizen claims that the delegation of management task leads to “greater work satisfaction” among teachers (ibid

5.2.5 Challenges

The following challenges were reported by my respondents as factors hindering the development of participative management in the school under investigation: resistance to change, autocratic domination and selfishness on the part of management, laziness and unwillingness among the staff, little understanding among the stakeholders, conflict of interest , a lack of training, and HIV and AIDS in the school community.

5.2.5.1 Resistance, autocracy and domination in the school

There are various factors that lead to resistance among people in an organization. Pashiardis (1994, pp. 14-17) argues that:

Some literature notes that, the implementation of any programme or process cannot be accomplished without foresight of problems. Conservativeness of educators and political economic force must be considered as forces that

work both for and against implementing this new approach. The line between the authority (principal) and responsibility of supervisor and employee are blurred and must be cleared.

When school principals are rigidly conservative and do not want to accept change in the system, this may lead to poor implementation of the new measures. My respondents noted that there was some resistance to change in the school, and voiced their dissatisfaction that some teachers and managers were still managing in the old autocratic way. They were, for instance, reluctant to accept advice from or delegate duties to other staff members, for fear of compromising their position of seniority (chapter 4.5.3). This kind of attitude stood in the way of the smooth running of participative management in the school. The South Africa Task Team Report (1996, p. 32) warns us that:

Resistance is a most reaction to change of this nature, so it is essential that education managers are aware of the factors leading to resistance and how to manage it. Resistance manifests itself in many or different ways, from the slow processing of salary cheque to the simplest refusal to work in different ways.

5.2.5.2 Laziness and unwillingness among the staff

Laziness and recalcitrance among staff members was one of the challenges facing the school management. My respondents revealed that there were some staff members who seemed to be lazy in carrying out their duties, particularly when additional tasks were delegated to them. It was precisely these individuals who stood to benefit most from being included in the participative management process. Being given responsibility ought to result in a greater sense of ownership and hence appropriate motivation.

But the respondents reported that some staff members were simply unwilling to participate or to take up any management position. Various reasons were given for this, notably stemming from a reluctance to get involved in a finance committee lest they be accused if money goes missing (chapter 4.5.5). This fear of assuming management responsibility seems to result from teachers not feeling free and trusted in the school. Pashiardis (1994, pp. 14-17) points out that “empowering teachers with

decision-making authority requires that a crucial mass of teachers be willing to spend extra time and energy on the process”. Pashiardis urges school managers to first assess their teachers’ “actual and desired level of personal involvement” in the school, and then proceed to motivate them accordingly. Teachers need to understand the benefits of participative management, for themselves as well as for the school itself. Pashiardis (1994, pp. 14-17) argues that institutions should develop a “high level of trust and keep their communication lines open to their staff members”. Lack of openness in the organization may cause teachers to distance themselves from participating in the management activities of the school.

5.2.5.3 Training need

The lack of understanding of participative management among stakeholders was hampering the implementation of the system. And there are various reasons attached to this. Pashiardis (1994, pp.14-17) argues that:

At present time teachers and administrators are ill prepared to tackle changing school and societal policies. The preparation for the decision making process must begin at the highest level of education. Teachers and administrators must learn both the theoretical and practical implication of shared decision making. As a consequence in the future the overall carrier expectation for teachers and administrators will change once they know what their professional obligations will be prior to entering the school building.

The lack of preparedness of stakeholders, especially teachers and managers in the school, was a serious problem facing participative management in many institutions. My respondents noted that this sometimes led to conflict in the school under investigation. Other problems included a lack of impartiality in decision making and the ignorance of parents with regard to the value of education. Training is required to raise the general level of awareness and understanding of participative management, and so as to minimize the risk of conflict. This was indeed suggested by some respondents in their interviews (chapter 4.5.9).

5.2.5.4 Openness of the system leads to conflict of interest

My respondents reported that the system of participative management was characterized by an openness which sometimes caused conflict. Some individuals made decisions to serve their personal interests rather than those of the school, and others displayed bias and discrimination in their conduct and judgement.

There was a perception that teachers might be too free because they sometimes abused this freedom by taking advantage of their peers or students. If principals are viewed as mere “facilitators” and “chief learners alongside the staff and students” (Bartha in Walker 1994, pp. 38-44), this might make it difficult for them to give any order to their staff. One respondent reported that some teachers were intentionally misbehaving and contravening the school rules (i.e. abusing their “democratic rights”), perhaps because they were unaware of the responsibilities attached to participative management. Indeed, it appears that a lack of understanding among stakeholders is the chief challenge facing the whole school.

5.2.5.5 HIV and AIDS as an educational challenge

Several management activities at the school were reported to be poorly attended throughout the year, for various reasons. My respondents regarded HIV and AIDS as a major cause of poor attendance and an overall hindrance to stakeholders’ participation in management activities. Nowadays many people in the community are HIV positive and sick, and as a result struggle to attend meetings and participate in other activities happening at the school. Therefore HIV and AIDs appear to be having a negative impact on the management of the school. Moreover, some learners are orphans because of the disease, which is of course affecting their learning performance.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed my findings, following themes emerging from my interviews with teachers at the school. These have included the committee system, parental involvement, meetings, collective decision making and student recognition as factors indicating and facilitating participative management in the school under investigation. Factors impeding or militating against participative management have included negative attitudes, a low level of understanding of the system, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Chapter six

Conclusion

In this chapter I summarize the main findings of my study. I also make recommendations for educational management practice and future research in the field. In the final part of the chapter I outline certain limitations affecting my study.

6.1 Summary of the main findings

A strong commitment among stakeholders towards participative management was a prominent feature of the findings. Commitment was shown by the stakeholders through their participation in matters relating to the management of the school. It was clear that teachers, learners, parents and interested community groups were committed to help in developing the school. The respondents revealed that the school's staff was on the whole dedicated to serving the community and united by a spirit of collegiality (Bush 2003, p. 71).

Committees emerged as the chief manifestation of participative management at the school. Respondents revealed that the school had a number of committees performing important management and administrative tasks. The committee system enabled the school to build a culture of delegated management and leadership that encouraged the emergence of new leaders. In the way in which all stakeholders were encouraged to participate, the school was in step with Namibian education policy (MEC, 1993). Among the committees, however, the School Board was the highest decision-making body, with overall responsibility for the running of the school.

The study revealed that meetings were the best medium for sound decision making at the school. Meetings allowed everyone's voice to be heard, including that of the students. Meetings formed the heart of the participative management process in the school.

Leadership expansion through delegation emerged as an instrument not only of management but also of fostering the development of leadership among all stakeholders. The visibility of various committees under the headship of teachers and parents signalled both the school's democratic attitude towards leadership and its commitment to the development of leadership in the school. The delegation of tasks played an integral role in this development. Respondents also noted that teachers were delegated by the principal to represent the school in various management contexts, which they saw as empowering.

The inclusion of students in the management structure came out strongly as an indication of participative management at the school. The respondents noted that children's voices were recognized in decision-making processes at the school. The SRC represented learners and liaised between them and management structures.

Also salient in participative management at the school was the strong bond between teachers and parents. Parents visited the school and helped teachers to motivate children to take their education seriously. In this and other matters, there appeared to be a highly positive relationship between the school and the community.

Participative decision making appeared to be the norm at the school. My respondents described decisions as being made and policies formulated after and through processes of consultation. They also confirmed that decisions were made at the school according to the principle of democratic participation, in terms of which all legitimate stakeholders had the right to participate and make a contribution.

Various challenges to the smooth implementation of participative management were also recorded. These included resistance to change and autocratic leadership among a certain element in the school's management. Some individuals appeared to make selfish decisions, which was divisive and counter-productive. Also hindering the spread of a participative culture in the school were laziness and an unwillingness to accept management responsibility on the part of some staff members.

A poor understanding of participative management also served to hamper its implementation in the school under investigation. This was matched by a poor

understanding on the part of some parents of the value of education for their children. The majority of respondents suggested that training on the subject of participative management was needed in the school.

The last challenge noted was the impact of HIV and AIDS on the community, which was affecting the participation in school activities of a number of stakeholders.

6.2 Potential value of this study

Participative management is a relatively young theory in educational circles, and many educationists and other stakeholders in education are still coming to terms with it. Having been in the system as a school principal and served in different management capacities at school and circuit level, I came to suspect that people's perceptions of participative management in schools were somewhat mixed. This study therefore identifies attitudes, tendencies and states-of-affairs that may be of help to the government in improving the system of education in Namibia. The following areas of potential value were identified.

- My findings may help in unpacking and understanding teachers' perceptions and experiences of participative management as a new phenomenon in management in Namibian primary schools. These perceptions and experiences have not previously been canvassed.
- The results of the study may assist the Department of Education in Namibia to find the best mechanism to address misconceptions among stakeholders with regard to participative management. The study may help the government in general to find the best way of educating citizens about their democratic right to participate in the education of their children.
- Findings such as those emerging from my study may play a significant role in changing teachers' perception of participative management in Namibian schools, whether Primary or Secondary.
- The study may also influence teachers' training college curriculum developers to incorporate a module on participative management in their education management curriculum. This will help new teachers and those who are

enrolling to become familiar with the concept and implement it when the time comes.

- The findings of this study may also play a significant role in influencing principals to change their actual management practice so as to be more accommodating of the participative approach.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of my study, I make the following recommendations. I take seriously Pashiardis's point that "teachers and administrators are ill prepared to tackle changing societal policies" (1994, pp. 14-17), for my findings indicate a general lack of readiness among teachers and administrators in the school.

- The Ministry of Education needs to offer training in democratic management to its stakeholders. The training should start with top officials, and empower them to approach the system appropriately.
- School managers need a broader understanding of what participative management is all about. For this, they need training and motivation to carry out what they have learned.
- The management team in each school needs to be thoroughly prepared to lead and manage their institution in the proper way. They need to understand that delegating responsibilities does not detract at all from their power as formal leaders of the school. The sharing of responsibilities simply means receiving help whilst empowering others.
- Teachers in schools also require motivation to take up management responsibilities as part of their leadership development.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

It emerged strongly that participative management in schools remains for many a problematic notion. There is a need for extensive research to discover the best way of overcoming the kind of misconception in Namibian schools that this study has

exposed. I therefore recommend that future researchers explore perceptions of the same phenomenon from the points of view of other parties.

- Future researchers should investigate the perceptions of learners and other interested groups, for example business people in the surrounding area. These parties might have different perceptions of participative management in the school that will help to identify potential areas for future planning.
- A large study is also needed on participative management in Namibian schools, both primary and secondary. It could be conducted regionally, to get a broader picture of participative management in schools in a particular region, because planning and in-service training is best organized by region. It should be able to give the Department of Education an idea of the relative progress in the implementation of participative management from school to school.
- There is an urgent need for an investigation into the training needs and motivational factors pertaining to participative management.

6.5 Limitation of the study

The limitation of this study is that it represents a tiny fish in an ocean – that is, it investigates only one among hundreds of schools in Namibia. Since the study records the views of only six teachers at one particular school the results are bound to be ungeneralizable. But this fact does not of course prevent readers from applying it to their own school context and making comparisons.

6.6 Quality

To guarantee the validity of my study, I engaged three different data collection techniques that granted me an opportunity to triangulate my findings for quality and rich information. I scrutinized all the data obtained from the three techniques, viz. interviews, observation, and document analysis. I also took the interview data to the

respondents for them to check, and I presented the data as I collected them from my respondents.

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Appendix A

Data collection tools

Semi-structured interview questions

Date.....

How long have you been teaching at this school?

.....
.....
.....

How would you describe the participation of teachers in the management of your school?

.....
.....
.....

What roles do you play in the management of the school?

.....
.....
.....

How would you tell about your school managers understanding of participative management?

.....
.....
.....

What do you think are the benefits of participative leadership and management in your school?

.....
.....
.....

In what way you think management of the school could+ be more participative?

.....
.....
.....

What are the problems or challenges in adopting participative management in the school?

Appendix B

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE OF TEACHERS PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOL

Date.....

Focus areas of observation	Remarks	Comments on each area.
Participation of teachers in meeting		
Contribution on discussion in meetings		
Involvement and contribution on decision making.		
Leadership sharing e.g. chairing or secretary of meetings.		
General mood of meetings		

SUMMARY OF THE DAY

.....

Appendix C

Documents review:

Date.....

Examine teachers' participation in the management of the school.

Documents to be reviewed:

Minutes of the previous meetings.

Drafted development plan of the school.

Drafted budget

Management structure of the school (organogram)

Drafted project proposal.

Area focused:

- attendance of teachers in meetings
- decision reached in meetings
- Leadership development for example chairing meetings, committee chairing, secretaries and subject head among teachers.

REMARKS

COMMENT

Appendix D



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF –EDUCATION: OSHIKOTO REGION

Tel: (065) 281909

Fax: (065) 240315

Private Bag 2028

Ondangwa

2007-07-06

Enquiries: Mr A. Strüwig

Mr. Samuel Kambonde

P.O.Box 239

Ondangwa

Re: Research at Engoyi Primary School.

Be informed that permission is duly granted to do research at the above-mentioned school in the Oshikoto Educational Region under the following conditions:

1. You have to make an appointment in time with the principal of the proposed to be visited school to brief him on your intentions to do research.
2. The exercise must not interfere with the normal school programme.
3. Any interviews to be conducted will be on a voluntary base.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andre Strüwig'.

Mr. Andre Strüwig

Regional Education Officer



Appendix E



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Tel: (046) 603 8383/4

Fax: (046) 622 8028

e-mail: education@ru.ac.za

15 June 2007

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Mr Samuel Kambonde (student number 607K3760) is a full-time Masters student of Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. He is following the M Ed in Education Leadership and Management.

Mr Kambonde is investigating participative management in a primary school in Namibia. In order to carry out his project successfully he will need access to organisations and people so that he can collect data.

It would be highly appreciated if you could assist Mr Kambonde by allowing him the kind of access he will need to complete his research. I believe his research will be of national and perhaps international importance, and hence he needs all the assistance and support he can get.

Thank you in anticipation. If you have any further queries about his research please do not hesitate to contact me at the phone number appearing on the letterhead, or at my email address which is H.vanderMescht@ru.ac.za

Sincerely

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht
(Supervisor)

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
RHODES UNIVERSITY
GRAHAMSTOWN 6140