

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE
MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP OF A
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN NAMIBIA**

Submitted by

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DEDICATION

This work is lovingly dedicated to the person I admire the most, the one who, together with our late father, sacrificed her own interests in order to provide the best she could for her children; my mentor, whose wisdom guided me throughout my life, the transformational leader I would like to follow: my mother, Mrs Angelika Tuauanekua Usurua.

ABSTRACT

Communication is a complex phenomenon, widely regarded as the lifeblood of every organisation, and ironically one of the least researched areas, at least in the field of leadership and management in an educational context. The paucity of literature in this field is evidence of this.

This study is an attempt to explore and gain understanding of teachers' experiences and perceptions of the role and functions of communication within an educational organisation, in this case a secondary school in Namibia. The study is an interpretive case study, and employed questionnaires and interviews to gather data from selected participants at the site of research.

The findings of the study highlight the dual role of communication as a functioning mechanism as well as a social or binding factor. The role of communication emerges as an essential element in the democratic functioning of the school. It is through communication that democratic practice is achieved as a vehicle for involvement in decision-making, sharing, teamwork, and as a medium for leadership leading to empowerment, human development and organisational development, bringing about change through the sharing of vision. Both formal and informal communication are shown to be functional to the institution. Some of the challenges that have emerged are the dangers of careless and malicious 'badmouthing' in informal communication, the persistence of some degree of top-down communication, and the challenges of communication in multi-cultural settings. The study highlights the need for strategies to improve communication, such as workshops on interpersonal communication.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The role of communication in organisations can never be overemphasized. According to Puth (2002: 4) “communication could be called the lifeblood of organizational leadership”. Barnard, the prominent social science theorist went so far as to describe the provision of a “system of communication” as “the first executive function” of managers (Rasberry and Lemoine 1986:7). As principals have dual roles of being leaders and managers at the same time, communication is central to their role. Practice has taught us that all organisations, including schools, need leaders and managers, hence these views illustrate that communication remains the fundamental core and cornerstone of how schools function.

During the apartheid era in Namibia education was characterised by a rigid bureaucratic management approach evident in top down communication. This form of communication was essentially task-oriented; teachers, and even principals, were merely implementers of what had been communicated to them from above. Now in an independent Namibia schools are expected to adopt a democratic management approach, and principals are expected to encourage broad participation. In this new management paradigm communication takes on a more complex and significant role, and this is the focus of my study.

There are several reasons why I was drawn to the phenomenon of communication in educational organisations. Firstly, schools are particularly complex organisations. In one sense they seem to exist simply to provide a product – education – and thus exhibit features of production line industry. The emphasis placed on good Grade 12 results in countries like South Africa reinforces this view. In this ‘factory’ model, communication may appear to be the simple passing down of instructions. In reality, though, schools are complex and unique as places where people come together to learn and teach, and where

the outcomes or goals are not easy to define. Schools are clearly more than manufacturers of good academic results. When I became a tutor at a training college I came to realise myself that educational institutions are more than organisations where some learn and others teach. Indeed, educational organisations, being such high concentrations of people whose goal is the development of others and themselves, are characterised by transformation of not only learners but of all stakeholders, including teachers and the community itself. A simplistic top-down or control-and-command view of communication is unlikely to capture this complexity.

Secondly, strongly allied to the first point is the fact that schools are also complex social organisations. Educators and learners interact both professionally and socially, and both groups in turn interact with the community and outside agencies. Schools are open systems, and this makes the phenomenon of communication even more interesting as well as challenging as a field of study.

Thirdly, since educational institutions are high concentrations of professional people with strong personal agendas I thought it likely that individual views on the role of communication would offer a range of possibilities and interpretations. Since organisation members' perceptions of the role of communication would be indicators of how they viewed themselves within the organisation I felt this would be a fruitful field of study.

Fourthly, there seems to be little research on communication in educational contexts. To the best of my knowledge no such studies have been carried out in Namibia. This study is also unique in terms of the approach I adopt. Internationally the work of Tourish and Hargie (Hargie, Tourish and Hargie 1994, Tourish and Hargie 1998, and Hunt, Tourish and Hargie 2000) serves as a landmark to the student of communication, and has proved to be extremely useful to my own understanding of this complex field. Even here, though, their work has been driven by different goals and purposes, focusing in quasi-positivistic

ways on auditing staff communication and strengths and weaknesses of communication in schools. My study is fully interpretive, and sets out to explore how six staff members of a school perceive and experience the role of communication. In this sense my study is exploratory.

Finally, personal experience has shown that at the root of virtually every problem experienced in organisational life lies a communication problem: whether it be lack of clarity, the failure to communicate, careless or hurtful personal communication, a breakdown in communication or poor listening, most of the problems we experience are in fact communication problems. I was therefore drawn to investigating so all-encompassing a phenomenon.

In light of above, this study seeks to explore the perceptions and experience of a principal and five teachers of the role of communication in an educational institution.

1.1 Context

Too often communication in organisations is taken for granted; because it is a natural part of life, we do not always look at communication as a functional aspect of organisational life. Tourish and Hargie (1998:176) argue that organisational communication is merely assumed and largely ignored. Yet communication is often referred to as the lifeblood of any organisation, including schools. One cannot imagine the existence of any organisation without communication. It seems ironic that with the ever-increasing sophistication in communication technology, professional and human communication remains an issue of concern in many organisations, including schools.

Of the various managerial functions such as organizing, coordinating and decision-making communication remains the most crucial variable of management, since none of the abovementioned functions can be executed without communication.

The role of communication in organisations has evolved in line with management thinking over the past one hundred years. During the scientific era (*circa* 1900 - 1920) when organisations were characterized by traditional hierarchical structures, managers saw communication as a means of giving instructions and monitoring employees' performance, hence the use of top-down channels during that time (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:22). During the human relations era (1920-1930s) communication was characterized by being horizontal and multi-directional and formal as well as informal communication were seen as functional to the organisation (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:37). These notions are still prevalent in current management thinking. Today schools are expected to move away from bureaucratic management styles towards implementing total participative management (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:28). This development is in line with current education policy requirements (Department of Education 1996:27), and implies increased employee involvement in management.

In democratically managed organisations, communication flow is multidirectional for various purposes such as soliciting input, coordinating activities, decision-making and conflict-resolution; hence the definition by Gibson and Hodgetts that

organizational communication is the transfer of information and knowledge among organizational members for the purpose of achieving organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:8).

One can argue that employees are the most important components of organisational life and that they are empowered by the ownership of information, such as organisational goals and procedures. This empowering can be generated by effective communication skills.

Effective communication implies good listening, clear messages and using appropriate channels such as writing, speaking or electronic media. Schools are no exceptions when it comes to striving for development, hence the trend towards restructuring and transformation in the education system. Successful transformation relies heavily on good

interpersonal relationships between the leader and his/her followers (Rasberry and Lemoine 1986: 55).

One of the most important aspects of communication is the way we send and receive the message. Most often, the receiver gets the blame if an activity is executed differently from what has been communicated. This implies that we tend to overlook how the message was sent or communicated. Living in a multi-cultural world adds to the complexity of communication. People of different cultures communicate differently and this can lead to misinterpretations (Hall 2002: 138).

The limited research on organisational communication is one indication that the role of communication has been overlooked. Hunt, Tourish and Hargie (2000: 120) claim that there is a dearth of research on communication, particularly in the field of education management. I believe that communication problems in educational organisations remain serious, and educational institutions in Namibia are no exception. Recently, when I was facilitating an Organisation Development (OD) workshop in Namibia for the purpose of an academic assignment, communication was ranked as the most dominant problem at a primary school (Kaura 2004:3). Even tertiary educational institutions are not immune to communication problems. At a particular tertiary educational institution in the northern part of Namibia, communication was again ranked as the most problematic issue during an OD facilitation workshop (Hausiku 2004:6)

My personal interest in doing this research lay in the fact that I wanted to explore how educators experience and perceive communication in their organisation. In short, how does the way they 'talk' shape the way they are working? The potential value of this research is that it will bring the issue of communication into focus as a crucial component of management in educational contexts, and may lead to further enquiry. It may also highlight problems encountered in this phenomenon.

As communication comprises various forms and media, I would like to point out that for the purpose of this study spoken or verbal communication has been chosen for investigation. The constraints of the scope of the study limited me to isolating one medium, and the chief reason for choosing the spoken medium was that I believed it to be the most common. Teachers use the spoken medium more frequently, and probing this medium would allow respondents greater opportunity to recall and relate communication incidents. Since this is an interpretive study, I felt that probing for easily remembered and frequently used communication events might ensure rich and descriptive data.

Spoken communication can either be formal or informal, and this study looks at both forms. The rationale for choosing both forms are *inter alia* the following: A school is a formal organisation, and hence is characterised by formal modes of communication, such as meetings. At the same time, though, informal communication is an essential ingredient of any organisation, since it is in the workplace that people meet and mix socially. Both forms therefore exist side by side, and some may argue that the two are difficult to separate. Moreover, while the role and purpose of formal communication seems unproblematic, people tend to have divergent views on the role of informal modes of communication in organisations. These notions triggered my curiosity to obtain these divergent views, and including the informal modes in my study has the potential of enriching the findings.

1.2 Goals

Arising from these interests, the goals of the study are:

- To gain a deeper understanding of the role of communication in the management of an educational institution.
- To explore educators' experience and perceptions of organisational communication.

1.3 Methodology

The following sections provide brief guidelines to my research design. These are elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

Since this research set out to understand educators' perspectives on the role of communication in the management of an educational institution, I employed a qualitative research approach since the interest in this study is almost exclusively understanding rather than prediction and control (Lindlof 1995: 56).

The method selected was the case study. Merriam (2002: 205) defined a qualitative case study as an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or single unit". Case studies are useful methodological approaches for researching behaviour, relationships and communication networks in an organisational setting (Berg 2001: 233). The study was conducted in Namibia where a school was selected in collaboration with an education development officer. Criteria which guided selection were chiefly convenience and the school's willingness to participate.

For data gathering I employed an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was piloted on a similar group, in this case teachers at another school, to test its effectiveness (Bell in Coleman and Briggs 2002:167). The revised questionnaire was then administered to the target school. I invited the entire staff, including the principal, to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire addressed the issues of individual as well as organisational challenges to organisational communication.

Jensen (2002: 240) claims that "the best way of finding out what the people think of something is to ask them". This implies interviewing or a "conversation with a purpose" as it sometimes referred to (Uys and Basson 1991:58). From the returned questionnaires

6 respondents were selected for interviews based on the richness of their answers. I used semi-structured interviews, as they allow respondents to provide answers at length and also enable the researcher to probe and follow up. The main issue addressed in the interviews concerned the respondents' subjective experience of organisational communication, such as the perceived strengths and weaknesses of communication in their school.

1.4 Data analysis

I used interpretive data analysis. According to Durrheim and Kelly (in Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999:139) interpretive analysis "provides a thorough description and simultaneously generates emphatic understanding of the phenomenon being studied." Data were thematised and categorized. Coding was done according to the themes identified during the above step, following the method recommended by Durrheim and Kelly (*Ibid.*:143).

1.5 Validity

The use of more than one data gathering tool increased the validity of the study (*Ibid.*:40). Case studies also gain validity through the richness and depth of the research, which I hope I have achieved (Winegardner online).

1.6 Ethical issues

Careful attention was given to ethical issues. First and foremost, the participants were informed in detail what the study entailed. This enabled participants to give informed consent if they wished to participate. As recommended by Cohen and Manion (2000:357), participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality which I upheld throughout the whole study, including the dissemination of the information provided. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage they wished to. Interviews were audio-taped with the consent of the participants. Transcribed

interview notes were given to the participants for verification (Cohen and Manion 1994:293).

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters.

Chapter 2 is the literature review and provides an overview of relevant communication theories, management theories and leadership theories, and a brief look at contemporary policies. Chapter 3 elaborates on the research design. Chapter 4 presents the data.

Chapter 5 discusses these data according to emerged themes. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarizing the findings, providing recommendations for practice and research, and reflecting on the potential value and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this highly competitive and ever-changing world, every organisation is striving towards excellence, and educational organisations are no exception to this. But as in any other organisation for an educational organisation to achieve this excellence effective communication is needed. Gibson and Hodgetts (1986:1) support this referring to an organisation's employees: "...quite often the overall effectiveness and efficiency of an enterprise rest on the ability of these people to communicate well". Added to this is the fact that every organisation exists for the specific purpose of providing either services or goods, and without effective communication that would not be possible.

2.2 Literature review

In this chapter an attempt is made to give an overview of communication theories and models relating to my study, with the emphasis on defining communication and describing the different forms of communication used in organisations. Following this, an overview of the role of communication in management and leadership theories is presented. Finally, this chapter looks at the management approaches for educational institutions as recommended by policy and contemporary theories.

2.3 What is communication?

Definitions of communication are numerous, but for the purpose of this thesis, I would like to give the description of communication provided by Smith and Cronje (as cited in van Deventer and Kruger 2003:156), for the simple reason that it relates to an educational setting:

Communication can be described as a message conveyed by a sender to a recipient(s), either verbally or non-verbally, with regard to activities,

management tasks, and/or relationships between staff, parents and learners and the school.

Windahl *et al.* (in Bush and West-Burnham 1994:246) define communication as “the exchange and sharing of information, attitudes, ideas and emotions”. Both definitions recognise communication as a two-way process, supporting Schramm’s view (discussed later in this chapter) of the communication process. The description by Smith and Cronje takes cognisance that communication also involves body language and can be task-oriented or person-oriented. On the other hand, Windahl sees communication as a developing strategy where people learn from each other, and he does not ignore the fact that emotions and feelings form part of communication. My conclusion, based on the work of the authors I have read, is that communication is more than just conveying a message from one person to another; it goes beyond that, as it involves all related effects. Several research studies have shown that the managers spend 75% (and some authors say even 80% to 90%) of their time communicating in one or another way (Steyn and van Niekerk 2002:31). This alone implies that communication is vital to any manager or leader and that lack of communication from his/her side can have detrimental effects on organisational functioning.

Having explored what communication is, it is appropriate to discuss select communication theories with their models, so as to enhance our understanding of this complex phenomenon.

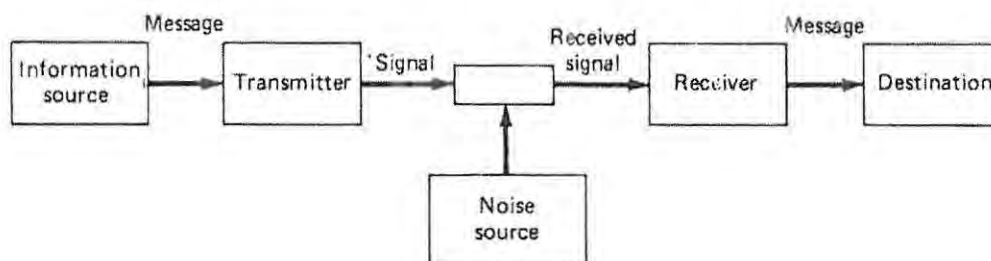
2.4 Communication theories

Several models and theories have been developed as an attempt to demystify this complex phenomenon. As communication theories were borrowed from various fields such as psychology, sociology and others, I only look at few of the prominent ones relating directly to my research.

2.4.1 Information theory

Shannon and Weaver (Bormann 1989:12) developed the first theory, which is known as “information theory” or “mathematical theory” due to its mechanistic nature. Shannon, being an engineer designed equipment through which sending and receiving of information could be done in a maximal capacity (*Ibid.*). In this theory, the emphasis rests on the efficiency of signal transmission and is not concerned with the meaning of the information. Information, as Weaver says in his own words, “relate[s] not so much to what you do say as to what you could say” (Severin and Tankard 1988:44). To Weaver, “information” refers to the freedom of choice one has in how one would like to construct a message. It is because of this freedom of choice that messages are bound to have uncertainty and randomness (Severin and Tankard 1988:44). No wonder that communication is considered as a complex phenomenon, because anything in life which has an element of uncertainty is multifaceted and will be difficult to understand.

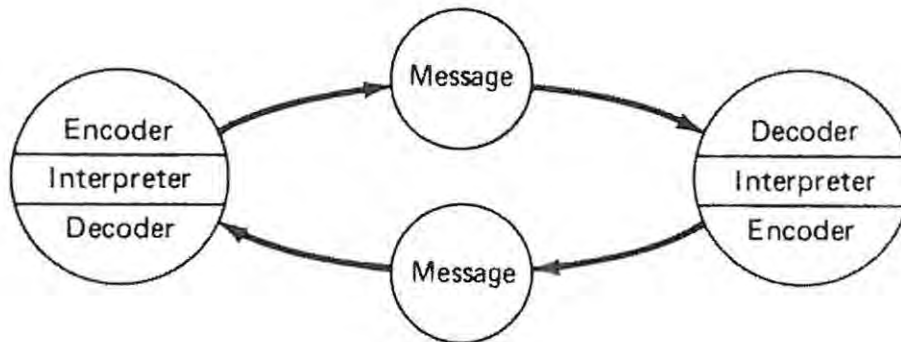
The Shannon and Weaver model (Bormann 1989:31)



In reaction to Shannon and Weaver’s model, Schramm developed a different communication model in an attempt to modify Shannon’s model, with emphasis on feedback, as he considered it to be a crucial variable in human communication. Shannon’s model, according to Severin and Tankard (1988:35), sees the sources of information as separate components, while Schramm argues that sources of information

should be viewed in relation to each other, which is why there is a “continuous loop” of shared information in his model (*Ibid.*).

The Schramm model (Bormann 1989:31)



What I have gathered from this communications theory and model is that for human communication to be effective, it requires both the receiver and the sender to interpret what is being conveyed to them before they respond, as is illustrated by the Schramm model. This model is in line with the contemporary view that communication in schools should be a reciprocal process between the principal, as the manager, and the teachers, as this fosters inquiry and consequently facilitates optimal organisation functioning.

The following section looks at how general management is understood and how educational management differs from it, before proceeding to a discussion of management theories in relation to communication as a fundamental aspect of management.

2.5 What is management?

Management and leadership are often used interchangeably even though they have different meanings. Adding to the confusion between the two concepts is the dual responsibility of a principal being a leader and a manager at the same time. The question asked by many is: “when is the principal a leader and when is s/he a manager?” The answer to this lies in the behavioural role of each concept. This thesis focuses on management as well as leadership, hence the need to differentiate between the two.

Management can be defined as a systematic process of setting direction and aims, organising and planning how goals can be achieved (Everard and Morris 1996:4). Management can also be referred to as a leading as well as a controlling process (Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum and Staude 2001:8), as it is bound to measure the achievements against a prior plan and take corrective action where appropriate (Hellriegel et al. 2001:11). Leadership, on the other hand, is concerned with influencing people, leading them and developing them through motivation and inspiration (Kotter as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996:374). Despite the differences between these two concepts, there are some commonalities and these include the following: both are value-driven, goal-oriented and are concerned with resources, be they human or physical. It is then as a result of the similarities and the differences that both management and leadership are needed in the running of the educational institution. For some, management is about “working *through* people to get things done” while leading is about “working *with* people to bring about change”. While they are distinct, both need communication to staff-members in order to realise the achievement of the school’s goals; for example teachers need to be communicated to by the principal, as the manager, regarding what subjects they are going to teach and they need to be appraised or evaluated, especially now with the contemporary organisational movements towards performance management and total quality management.

2.5.1 What is educational management?

Management of other organisations differs from educational management. For me, educational management is different primarily with regard to the process resulting from management at schools. van Deventer and Kruger (2003:66) define education management as “a specific kind of work, i.e. the management of learning and teaching consisting of management tasks or activities known as planning, problem solving, decision-making, policy-making, organising, coordinating, leading and control of school education events”. A quick glimpse at this definition might deceive you, as there is nothing peculiar to it. But the notion by Bush (2003:14) that educational management needs a distinct management approach will broaden our understanding. The following is

the summary by Bush on aspects which compel educationalists to have a different management approach:

- setting of educational objectives is a complex activity;
- the teachers' unarguable need is for autonomy in classrooms;
- there is insufficient time for managers at all levels to attend to managerial aspects; and
- the visibility of learners anticipated to be transformed in outputs (*Ibid.*).

I concur with Bush (*Ibid.*) that setting educational objectives is a complex task, taking into consideration that the school as an open system is quite dependent on the outside environment for input and survival. This implies that school heads do not have absolute autonomy when it comes to setting objectives, due to the contribution and demands of the outside environment, for example the government, or trends in the community they serve. Another example, which adds to the complexity of this, is the lack of resources like textbooks in Namibian schools. One cannot set the objective of all learners passing if they do not have textbooks in the first place. It is in this light that continuous and harmonious communication is required between the school and other stakeholders such as the state, corporate sponsors, or NGOs to facilitate setting of objectives, and consequently to realise their collective needs, as they are dependent on each other. Marrow (as cited in Weisbord 1987:104) concurs, when he says of interdependence that "although we need each other", but he does not ignore the fact that "interdependence is the greatest challenge". Interdependence can be viewed as beneficial at first, but if one thinks beyond face value, you end up seeing many of the complexities involved. Based on this, a communication strategy of working towards a common goal for the school and its external environment is essential, which again involves time from the school manager.

That managers do not have sufficient time to attend to administrative duties is shown in the fact that at some schools, principals have the responsibility of being a teacher, have to attend cluster meetings for principals, and have to run the school at the same time. This overloading of work forces principals to do their administrative tasks after hours, if they want to achieve the best for their schools.

The following section discusses management theories with emphasis on communication.

2.6 Management theories

Earlier on in this chapter, I pointed out that schools need management, a different kind of management approach to be specific. The management theories, which developed over the past hundred years, are distinctive in their approach, but one cannot ignore the fact that they all give particular attention to communication as one aspect fundamental to management. Bearing this in mind I look at these theories and their implication for the management of communication in the educational institutions.

2.6.1 Scientific management theory

Scientific management theory is the earliest of all management theories and has various emphases, such as clearly defined tasks (as it is task oriented) and the principle that all needed tools should be at the workers' disposal. This theory also stresses the importance of task demarcation according to expertise. It is also bureaucratic in nature as it recommends the top-down approach in decision-making (Hoy and Miskel 1996:9). Another idea from this theory is that workers should be supervised and control measures should be applied, which are also relevant to the management functions in educational institutions today. Teachers get checked on their performance (for example, how they prepare their lessons and even on the completing of attendance registers).

The positive effect of this theory is that it provides a formal management structure to the school, whereby the position of the principal is defined in terms of expectations; he is the central point of not only receiving information but also giving feedback to the upper levels such as the regional educational offices, and to staff-members. Simply put, he is the inter-mediator. Clearly defined tasks and responsibilities need to be clearly communicated to the teachers and the location of needed resources should also be communicated. That is why there is an induction program in the Namibian education system whereby newly appointed teachers are oriented concerning the operation of the organisation. All these require effective communication skills for managers, which include active listening, sending clear messages (Adey and Andrew 1990), openness, and giving and receiving feedback (Schmuck and Runkel 1994).

However the top-down approach in decision-making, which this theory recommends, is not wholly beneficial when applied to educational institutions. It is also not in line with the Namibian educational policy, which calls for democratic education, where all stakeholders, including the parents and learners, should be involved in decisions regarding learning and teaching. Parental meetings and school-board meetings are becoming common in Namibia, and this is one manifestation of the application of democratic education. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:10), however, provide a reminder that some matters need expert knowledge and that consensual decision is not appropriate in all situations. Here is also where the role of a manager comes in, to take the lead in being selective concerning whom to involve in which matters. For example, when it comes to curriculum development, Bush (1995:3) strongly supports this idea by reminding us again that “No curriculum would last beyond a week if teachers and managers took seriously the ever increasing flood of prescriptive advice offered by politicians and pressure groups”. It is based on the problem of this ‘flood of advice’ that the Namibian education policy emphasises that the curriculum should be developed in such a way that it encompasses the situational needs of the *whole of* Namibian society (Namibia 1993:121). This for me is a strategy, not just to involve the community, but equally appropriate where the community being served are considered when developing the curriculum. Apart from these curriculum issues, there are areas where school managers are sometimes overruled by the government. For example, Namibian education put the emphasis on mass education, stipulating “what matters most is not how many learners per teacher but how well those students have learned” (Namibia 1993:44). The implication is that sometimes principals are obliged to take more learners than they feel their schools can accommodate.

Another objection to scientific management is that it ignores the informal structure of an organisation, which is considered as an important aspect by the human relations approach. The implication thereof is that in any organisation where employees are not encouraged to air their views and concerns they turn to informal communication channels, which are sometimes destructive to the organisation, for example damaging the image of the organisation through “badmouthing”. Another consequence of not involving

staff-members in the communication process is that they lose the feeling of ownership because they are not empowered and this causes an increased tendency to resort to informal communication. As Andrews and Baird (1995:28) put it, “the inability to communicate effectively in organisations can result in feelings of powerlessness, anonymity and the experience of being passed over when important decisions are taken”. Just guess what the consequences will be; low morale, unhappiness and of course unproductivity. Relating this to the educational system, teachers will be motivated to do classroom teaching if they have to be involved in the development of a curriculum. Simply because they took part in developing the curriculum, a feeling of ownership of the curriculum is often present, and they feel not only empowered but also responsible to implement it. Still relating to informal communication, the manager should not ignore this type of communication, neither the positive or negative aspects, because sometimes, even in negative communication, he will become aware of what he is not doing which he might find crucial for the effective running of the organisation.

It is with regard to all these factors that the human relations approach theory differs, as it is people-oriented and puts emphasis on multi-directional communication as well as informal communication.

2.6.2 Human relations approach

The concern of this theory is that informal and individual relationships are key aspects in organisation. The reasoning behind this is that the informal norms emerge not only to govern the behaviour but also to unify the group (Hoy and Miskel 1996:14). In brief, formal and informal communication is considered as being functional to the organisation (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:37). But when it comes to an educational institution, how does informal communication manifest itself? In some educational institutions, teachers, including the principal, call each other by their first names. The implication of these informal relationships is that they reduce tension among teachers and in the process, friendships are formed, and that they promote spontaneity and facilitate communication. The above was proved by the Hawthorne studies, where open communication was enhanced, which led not only to a productive working environment but also to more

satisfied workers (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:28). But the fact that informal communication can also have negative effects, such as forming of cliques based on tribalism, should also not be forgotten. These cliques mostly consist of gossip-groups, and that can be a barrier to effective communication, resulting also in divisions among members. Staff-members are normally divided into two groups: those who feel positive and committed to go the extra mile in doing their work, and the other group made up of members who just do their work. This in itself can be a barrier to effective communication.

On a positive note, another example of functional informal communication in schools is, for example, during tea-breaks or even in corridors where teachers teaching the same subject(s) share information on certain aspects concerning their teaching. To add to this, members of an organisation, including schools, have the tendency to extend what has been communicated formally in informal conversations as ways of expressing their “true” feelings either in a negative or positive way, or to get clarity on matters discussed previously. Simon (as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996:28) has this to say on this mode of communication: “No formal organisation will operate without an accompanying informal [one]”. This tells us that it is not a matter of choice; informal communication is unavoidable and is part of organisational context.

Apart from informal communication being considered as an important aspect, human relations theory objects to the top-down communication model and instead recommends a downward, upward horizontal and vertical model. In the words of Gibson and Hodgetts relating to the human relations perspective on communication: “...organisational communication is.... not just a means to talk to the workers but for management to listen to what the workers were saying” (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:28). By saying this, Gibson and Hodgetts point out the inadequacy of the information theory discussed earlier, which does not consider feedback as essential to communication. This is also true in the educational institution, where the principal is expected or required to provide the opportunity for staff-members to air their views or even their approval or disapproval. Horizontal communication is apparent in schools today, where departmental meetings are being held and where sharing of information is happening. Communication behaviours depend largely on the management style of the principal; only principals who are

participative in their management listen to what the staff-members have to say. This is in line with the Task Team Report recommendation on educational management, stipulating that "...management is a process to which *all* contribute and in which everyone in an organisation ought to be involved" (my emphasis) (Department of Education 1996:27). Follett, one of the prominent human relations approach theorists, agrees with this definition, putting emphasis not only on involving employees but also on coordination and increased communication in order to maintain good relationships, which is irrefutably one of the most important aspects that underscores effective organisation (Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum and Staude 2001:59). Further, Follett recommends, "managers recognise that each person is a collection of beliefs, emotions and feelings" (*Ibid.*). The implication of this for management is that managers should see teachers as unique beings with unique characteristics and that calls for communication to be a two-way process where the staff-members can express how they *really* feel and this can effectively be accommodated in an informal communication. Follett's views find support in her co-theorist, Barnard, who is of the opinion that members' cooperation and continuous communication amongst themselves are fundamental to the effectiveness of the organisation and that communication with the employees is the main role of managers (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:60.) This again explains why managers spend 75% of their time in communicating, as indicated earlier in this chapter. It is no surprise therefore that Steyn and van Niekerk (2002:185) argue that inadequate communication from the principal's side is one cause of stress in schools.

My analysis of this theory is that informal communication is functional to educational organisation, provided that it is about sharing knowledge or expertise and facilitating cohesiveness. However, schools remain formal institutions where certain rules and regulations (for example, writing of an examination) should be adhered to and informality should be applied where and when it is appropriate. In the contemporary view, a people-oriented management approach is recommended for any organisation to improve productivity, but practice in schools has taught us that sole application of that dimension will not work, as some economic incentive remains central to the employees. That is why one of the major goals of the teachers' unions either in Namibia or neighbouring South Africa is negotiating for better salaries for teachers. At the time of

writing this thesis, teachers in South Africa held a peaceful stay-away demonstration, to express their dissatisfaction with their current wages (Cooper & Matthewson 2004). This is evidence that money remains an important motivator for employees, as Taylor believed (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:57).

Now I turn to the next theory that, unlike the first two theories, combines the human aspect as well as the production aspect.

2.6.3 Social science approach

While the scientific theory is task-oriented and the human relations theory is people-oriented, the social science theory is a combination of both dimensions; management should be task- as well as people-oriented (Hoy and Miskel 1996:15). This means that this theory is concerned with the needs of the organisation as well as the needs of the individuals. And here is where the essence of communication comes in: the principal needs to communicate with the staff-members in order to know their needs as well as communicating to them the needs of the organisation. Knowing how to perform a certain task needs communication as well. This brings me to the implication of this theory for educational management; which is that the principal as a manager should not only be able to communicate clearly how a certain task should be executed, but must also let the staff-members communicate their needs to him. Put in brief, it requires all staff-members involvement in decision-making.

Another important aspect of this theory is the open-system model which, according to Hoy and Miskel (1996:30), views organisations as “not only influenced by environments but also dependent on them”. This has connotation to the contemporary organisational thought that organisations cannot be viewed in isolation from their environment. According to a social science theorist, Barnard, “successful management rests upon good relationships with the external environment with whom the managers have to deal with regularly” (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:60) Relating this to the educational institutions, schools are open systems which are comprised of internal environmental factors such as the principal, head of departments, the teachers, learners as well as the various subject departments. In the same vein, the schools are influenced by external environmental

factors, such as the government, society, the parents and the community at large. As I have mentioned on earlier, the schools can be influenced for good or bad by the external environment, and Smith (2003:9) maintains “it is crucial that an organisation have clear channels of communication with its environment in order to understand and harness this influence in the interests of the organisation”. This again brings the realisation of the implication it has for the management. For example now, in independent Namibia, where a democratic education approach for a democratic society has been adopted, it is expected that the principals and the teachers should be active creators and managers who facilitate broad participation from the parents as well as the community in making major decisions in education. Parents and the community should be told about their rights in shaping and guiding the educational system (Namibia 1993:42). The consequence of this is that it leads to empowerment of the whole community that, in turn, will assist with the primary roles of educational institutions that are teaching and learning. This can only be achieved through continuous and effective communication between the school and the external environment.

Further analysis of this theory shows that it is in line with the systems theory, where interrelated parts are viewed in relation to each other (French and Bell 1999:82). Schools are the transformation agencies, receiving input from the outside environment and transferring outputs in return; it is based on this interdependence that whatever problems experienced or decisions to be made should be viewed within the holistic framework of internal as well as external context. Simply put, organisational needs, as well as the people’s, needs, should be the basis of management, facilitated by continuous and effective communication in order to harmonise them

Having discussed the social science approach, I would like to take you on a journey of critical awareness via the post-modern theories.

2.6.4 Post-modern theories

These theories are concerned with the possibility that there is no universal truth for any given phenomenon, but posit the existence of multiple realities (Hoy and Miskel 1996:18). This is why they can be conflated with the post-structuralist theory (Weedon

1997:170). These theories are interpretive, in the sense that they accommodate or value any given contribution to finding the truth. This means they look beyond the one “known” reality in search for other realities. A very good example is the discrimination against women, especially when it comes to managerial or leadership positions, which many people believe to be historically-based. The post-modernist theories questioning these patriarchal structures, although not rejecting this historical basis, they are convinced that there are other contributing factors (Weedon 1997:12). This hold true to practice, because discrimination against women today has a political element, among others, in it.

Deconstruction of text is one major principle of these theories, which implies that the way of communicating, either verbal or non-verbal, is subject to interpretations (Weedon 1997:12) based on individual knowledge as well as cultural experiences. The implication here is that living in this increasingly multi-cultural world can have disadvantageous effect, if one applies this theory based on individual knowledge, as some verbal and non-verbal communication behaviour has different meanings for different societies. For example; not looking another person in the eyes while conversing in one culture means being untrustworthy, while in another culture it has the divergent meaning of being respectful. Yet this theory, in my view, stresses that we as individuals should be open-minded to different ways of communication, and this means that we should always be conscious while conversing that other people might interpret our communication behaviours differently from what we might intend to convey. Awareness of this can help us to eliminate any barriers to communication.

2.6.5 Critical theory

This theory questions the state of affairs that exists at a particular time; it examines why events are happening or done in a certain way. Relating to educational communication, this theory could ask the following questions: Who does the present flow of communication benefit, the principal or the staff-members? Who is being oppressed by the communication structure of the organisation? Do staff-members get readily informed about any activity concerning them, if not, why is this not happening? What is being communicated? (Hoy and Miskel 1996:2). The implication of this theory for educational

management is that it is heuristic in nature as it questions states of affairs in such a way that people become aware of what is really happening in their schools. For me, making people aware is empowering in the sense that they realise (for example) that their communication is negatively affected by the organisational structure and consequently they feel the need for change. That is the reason why Hoy and Miskel (1996:19) state that “critical theory just like the post-modernists...wants to change basic societal and organisational structures that are responsible for alienation, repression and inequality”. It is a known fact, of course, that any barrier to communication can cause alienation.

2.6.6 Feminist management theory

As is reflected in the name, this theory is concerned with the fact that women are scarce in managerial positions, and that bureaucracy is not the ideal way of management; rather, management based on egalitarian principles is preferred. To feminists, bureaucracy reflects the oppression of women, and they propose the integration of both genders (Hoy and Miskel 1996:20). The implication of this theory for educational management is that as in critical theory, the feeling of being “undermined” and oppressed is intentionally addressed to bringing about change. This is specifically in line with affirmative action, which is fighting for women to be appointed to managerial positions. Several studies show that women leaders are collaborative in their approach (Fennell 2002:114; Mwingi 1999) and that this is beneficial to all in the school community and facilitates communication.

2.7 What is educational leadership?

While the educational manager is more concerned with “things” and the maintaining of all functional process and procedures, the educational leader focuses on people. Murgatroyd and Gray (as cited in Bush and West-Burnham 1994:68) concur with this, saying that “leadership is not about skills, rules or procedures but about the person and the quality of their relationships with others”. For me, this statement highlights communication as an important aspect of leadership, because quality relationships among people are established and maintained through effective communication. Another question provoked by this statement, is if leadership is about people, how does it relate to

educational organisations? When one thinks about schools, the first thought that comes to mind is that schools are there to provide education to learners. But when one thinks of schools in the leadership context, you get a much bigger picture. Schools are the only organisations where transformation is taking place at a level so basic to everyday life. Learners are inputs waiting to be transformed into outputs, and this is where transformational ability is needed. This is found in leadership, specifically in instructional and transformational leadership, which will be discussed later in this chapter. One of the major aspects that facilitate transformation is communication.

2.8 Leadership theories

In the first chapter, I mentioned that organisations are non-existent without communication. In addition, according to Cawood, Kapp and Swartz (1989:61): “without communication leadership would not be possible” and leaders themselves maintain this notion, saying that “leadership is communication” (*Ibid.*). As with management theories, this section discusses some leadership theories linked to the functioning of schools and, most importantly, an attempt is made to point out the implications they have for communication in leading educational institutions.

2.8.1 Trait theory

This is the earliest leadership theory, also known as the “Great Man” theory, referring to Aristotle who viewed leadership as ascribed rather than acquired. That means that some individuals can be born with leadership characteristics (Hoy and Miskel 1996:376). The major assumption of this theory is that leaders are quite different from their followers, as they are energetic, competent and charismatic (Hoy and Miskel 1996:377), and these traits form the basis for being acceptable and respected by their followers.

Studies found this trait theory to provide insufficient guidance and knowledge for the understanding of leadership (Cawood, Kapp and Swartz 1989:33). However, when it comes to practice, some aspects of trait leadership such as perseverance and intelligence to name two are being used today to measure leadership abilities. I wonder also whether the myth about this trait will totally die eventually, because wherever we go we hear people saying, “s/he is really a born leader” referring to an ideal leader. The same applies

to communication; leaders who are articulate, especially in formal settings are often referred to as effective leaders. For me this implies clearly that communication is central to leadership. Although the trait leader is viewed as an inspiring leader, this theory does not pay much attention to communication as a crucial aspect for leaders, but one cannot ignore the fact that to be a charismatic leader requires effective communication, which I assume is a trait possessed by the trait leader. This view is echoed by Bass, who found that communication was rated highly as a characteristic of charismatic leaders by subordinates among other variables such as judgement/decision-making and risk taking (Bass 1990:189).

My analysis of this theory is that it does not consider leadership as an art, which can be learned, according to Kouzes and Posner (2003:387). The reality is that both leadership and communication are arts that can be learned.

The reaction to trait theory led to the birth of contingency theory, which rejects the motto that leaders are born, but yet assumes some aspects of trait theory and blends it with situational theory (Cawood, Kapp and Swartz 1989:34).

2.8.2 Contingency theory

Fiedler, the founder of contingency theory is one of the leadership theorists who find trait theory to be inadequate for understanding leadership. Although he rejected the main motto of trait theory that “leaders are born”, he did not reject some of the factors such as high level of energy, sense of responsibility and motivation, as he considered them to be important for measuring the effectiveness of leadership (Hoy and Miskel 1996:378), which is why he blended them with situational theory. This brings me to the main assumption of contingency theory, which stipulates that the effectiveness of the leader is determined by the dominant traits of the leader in combination with the situation (Hoy and Miskel 1996:376) The dominant traits are bi-dimensional: task-oriented leadership style and people-oriented leadership style. The favourableness of the situation refers to the contextual variables in the environment where the leader leads.

What is, in my opinion, valuable about this theory is that it puts emphasis on the environmental context. Relating this theory to the educational setting, it is in line with

what French and Bell say about open systems: They view open systems as having “purposes and goals, the reasons for their existence”, and these must align with the environmental needs. (French and Bell 1999:82). This, in my view, brings communication to the fore as an essential aspect of leadership, as the tool to deal with the external environment as well as the internal environment. Another good point of this theory is that it presents a “flexible” leadership model, in the sense that it suggests a task-oriented approach as well as a people-oriented approach, depending on which one suits the situation. According to Gibson and Hodgetts (1986:186) this theory provides value to effective communication as “it helps the leader understand the varied environments in which he or she is functioning and encourages the individual to create that environment which is most conducive to their own style of communication and management”. With regard to a task-oriented and people-oriented leadership approach, again this requires that the leader should adjust his communication styles to the situation at hand. If it is about a task, then that means the leader should communicate clearly and specifically regarding how and when he wants the task to be done, and also to provide a rationale for doing it to the subordinate, as this will broaden the subordinate’s understanding of what was communicated to him. On the other hand, person-oriented communication requires a different approach; here the leader needs to be a good listener, as well as providing an opportunity for the subordinate to talk, to be more empathetic if need be and to create a positive environment which facilitates open communication. This theory informs transformational leadership, which echoes the same approach, although it has other significant emphases, such as bringing about change, which make it distinct it from the contingency approach.

2.8.3 Transformational versus transactional leadership

Transformational leadership was posited by James McGregor Burns in 1978 and was initially applied in business and politics (Liontos 1992:1) before it found a “home” in the educational organisations during the 1990’s, with the thrusting of schools towards global transformation and restructuring activities (Hallinger 2003:335). I should also add that the advent of transformational leadership arose as a reaction to the rigid hierarchical management structure, comprised of top-down communication and policy-driven

approach, to name just a few (*Ibid.*). Practice in the educational systems gave a good testimony of the predominance of, and a moving away from, this “tight” bureaucratic leadership to a “flexible” leadership, which supports a collaborative attitude to communication. It is against this background that I feel compelled to distinguish between the two leadership styles, in order for us to understand the shift to transformational leadership.

Although both schools of thought regarding leadership are concerned with leaders finding out what their employees or followers need, the difference lies in the fact that, with transactional leadership both the leaders and the follower’s wants and needs are dispersed, and the focus is on individual gain, such as service for support (Hoy and Miskel 1996:393). For example, in Namibia during the apartheid system when the bureaucratic style was practised, the black population wanted to be educated, and in return for this, the leaders of the day only allowed few black people to further their studies up to matric level, and implemented a curriculum which was biased towards promoting the oppressor’s history and education and was limited to vocational utility (Namibia 1993:2). By contrast, transformational leadership is characterised by identifying collective needs for collective gain and working towards meeting them (Hoy and Miskel 1996:394). Relating this to an educational setting, the governments of most African countries have realised the importance of education for *all* up to tertiary level, and this is manifested in the practice of sponsoring as many students as possible to further their studies, which then is a collective gain. The readiness of the present governments in many countries to provide finances for further studies for potential candidates, and not just in Africa, for me demonstrates leaders’ encouragement for employees and students to look beyond their present situations and to attempt to develop themselves further. And being motivational and inspirational are typical characteristics of the transformational leader (Hoy and Miskel 1990:393). Needless to say, any motivational action requires a reciprocal communication, where the motivator needs to know the capabilities of the other person to use these as guiding principles for motivating them. This again calls for effective communication practice from the principal as a leader, who is supposed not just to be a “talker” but a good listener.

Although both schools of leadership emphasise values, the difference lies in the distinctiveness of those values; the values that underscore transformational leadership include “equality”, “justice”, “liberty” (Burns, as cited in Beare, Caldwell and Millikan 1989:31) and excellence, while the values for transactional leadership are “honesty”, “responsibility” and commitment towards the typical mutual agreement (*Ibid.*). For Greenfield, values are fundamental to leadership. He asserts that “organisations are built on the unification of people around values” Greenfield (as cited in Beare, Caldwell and Millikan 1989:31). All these values mentioned serve as the binding factor between the leader and his/her followers. Another fundamental aspect to transformational leadership is that it creates widespread awareness of shared vision (*Ibid.*), while transactional leadership is characterised by diffuse envisioning. The envisioning highlights why the subordinates comply with their leaders. The subordinates of the transactional leader have no option but to comply, if they want rewards or something in return, while the followers of the transformational leader comply because they develop a sense of ownership and feel responsible for accomplishing the vision and also realise the potential benefit which exists for collective gain; for example, implementation of an improving strategy such as organisational development (OD). Shared envisioning creates a team spirit, enthusiasm and optimism (Hoy and Miskel 1996:394). Transformational leadership is task-oriented as well as people-oriented, while transactional leadership is entirely task-oriented. It is in this light of valuing and trusting human aspects that the transformational leader is not only sharing the risks linked to transformational processes (*Ibid.*) but also shares the power of authority with the subordinates, and as the followers are provided with the opportunity to understudy the leader, they also receive coaching in the mechanics of leadership, so that the “followers become leaders and leaders become the change agents” (Hoy and Miskel 1996:393). With transactional leadership, on the other hand, the leader ultimately holds the power. This “participative” management of transformational leadership implies that it goes beyond transactional leadership. The next section discusses the behavioural dimensions of transformational leadership.

“Transformational leadership assumes that the fundamental focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organisational members” (Bush 2003:76). Gaining commitments and capacities calls for this leadership to display various behavioural

dimensions. Relating this to an educational setting, according to Sergiovanni (as cited in (Bush and West-Burnham 1994:69), commitment is ensured in that “leaders and followers are united in pursuit of higher-levels goals common to both. Both want to become the best. Both want to shape the school in a new direction”. The transformational leader, for example, speaks with enthusiasm about what s/he wants to achieve with the followers, and this has a cascade effect on the followers, as they feel content to imitate her/him; this has been referred to as “idealized influence” (Hoy and Miskel 1996:394).

Another important aspect of this leadership theory is the belief that people can be innovative and creative, provided that supportive, rather than judgmental, criticism is offered (Bass and Avolio 1994:3). Relating this to education, teachers get the opportunity to experiment with (for example) new teaching methods and provide suggestions for change. This behaviour prevents stagnation in teachers and equally triggers their curiosity to continuously experiment (*Ibid.*). The individual consideration that this leader provides, acknowledges every human being as unique with differing strengths and weaknesses. Personal communication is established, which consequently assists the leader in how best s/he can coach and provide mentoring to the followers (*Ibid.*).

As much as this leadership is innovative and flexible, a study by Leithwood and Jantzi found it to have “weak but indirect significant effects on student participation” (Leithwood and Jantzi, as cited in Wallace and Poulson 2003:207). I do concur with this view, taking into consideration the renewed interest in instructional leadership, which has direct effect on teaching and learning, but these two schools of leadership, in my opinion, are not mutually exclusive; instead they are complementary.

The provision of opportunity for exploring new ideas and the individual consideration of this leadership is tantamount to instructional leadership, to a certain extent, which will be discussed below.

2.8.4 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership started in the 1980’s, after researchers discovered that the successful schools were those who had curriculum-oriented as well as instruction-oriented principals (Larry online). The bureaucratic style, or transactional leadership as it

is sometimes referred to, was (and in some places, still is) task-oriented, policy-driven with close attention paid to the curriculum, when applied to school management. It is not surprising that this kind of leadership was prevalent during the apartheid era where the rulers of the day prescribed the syllabi for the schools, the managers of which were not allowed any input into the design process, discouraging innovation and creativity. The authorities pressured the principals and the principals in return pressured the teachers to excel in their instruction. Needless to say, learners developed the mentality of wanting to excel, to escape the corporal punishment that accompanied failing any single test. During this era, secondary school principals were not appointed based on academic qualification as such, but on how effective they were in their instruction, measured by student performance outcomes.

In the mid-1990's, transformational leadership displaced instructional leadership, as educators felt the need for reforming the schools, which required transformational leadership. But this displacement was short-lived, as realisation of education being an expensive process, which calls for quantifiable evidence of success that in turn requires "tight" leadership (as some people refer to it), fuelled a renewed interest in instructional leadership (Larry online: 1). This renewed interest is guided by the contemporary view of this mode of leadership, which, according to Blase and Blase (2002:130), can be summarised as follows:

- Instructional leadership is not only "student oriented" as was previously thought; but puts emphasis on the professional growth and development of teachers, direct support to teachers and special attention to curriculum development. Action research has also become an important aspect of this leadership.
- Principal behaviour has come to the fore as having direct impact on teachers' classroom instruction. In the same vein, there seems to be a "relationship between the principal's behaviour and teacher's commitment, involvement and innovation", as was revealed by studies (Blase and Blase 2002:130).
- Communicating the mission of the school remains central to this leadership and this requires that the school has clear measurable goals (Hallinger 2003:332), which according to Bush, as previously noted, is an impossible task.

This contemporary view brings to the fore the fact that this leadership is not only task oriented, but also has a people-oriented element. It is concerned with self-reflection by teachers as well as non-discriminating support by the principal through positive feedback, recognition and reinforcement of strengths and suggestions on how weak areas can be improved (Blase and Blase 2002:130). Unlike in the past, the teacher and the principal are very much aware that student performance is largely dependent on their interaction with each other. It is in this light that this style of leadership puts emphasis on a collaborative relationship, not only with the principal, but with colleagues, and the provision of opportunities for teachers to be creative and innovative in designing their instruction programmes or teaching methods (Blase and Blase 2002:135). Application of all these behaviours has the effects of increased teamwork and inspiration (Blase and Blase 2002:135), autonomy and the determination to deliver the best. For me this proves that this leadership can be *transformational*, taking also into consideration that it aims at the continuous improvement of teaching and learning and, most importantly, the professional development of the teacher. The will to deliver the best results from encouragement and the promotion of an instructional climate is one major aspect of instructional leadership (van Deventer and Kruger 2003:247). The application of instructional leadership is a time consuming-task.

The task overload of the principal is acknowledged by van Deventer and Kruger but yet they assert that “in spite of the complexity and volume of the principal’s task, his main responsibility remains that of ensuring that effective teaching and learning is taking place” (van Deventer and Kruger 2003:245). I concur with this view, because teaching and learning remain the fundamental purposes for the existence of schools, hence the emphasis. However van Deventer and Kruger show concern for the principals’ task overload and again provide supportive comment on this:

Because of the extensiveness of the instructional programme of a school, principals cannot exercise instructional leadership alone, and therefore elements of the programme can and should be delegated to deputy-principals, heads of department and educators (van Deventer and Kruger 2003:247).

Although the “visible practicability” of instructional leadership is questionable, one aspect remains true, and is in line with this view, and that is that heads of departments are

tasked with provision of assistance to teachers concerning setting up of question papers and moderating of question papers.

Although this leadership should be characterised by high visibility, Hallinger is sceptical when it comes to practice. He questions the “will and skill” of the principal to carry out this task (Hallinger 2003:335). This view is echoed by both Barth, and Lambert (Barth (1990) and Lambert (1998) as cited in Hallinger (*Ibid.*) :

Moreover, any intention to provide instructional leadership, especially in secondary schools, is complicated by the facts that in many cases principals have less expertise than the teachers whom they supervise.

I fully concur with this view, taking into consideration that contemporary teacher courses make provision for specialising in certain subjects in which the principals might not have sufficient knowledge. Practices in schools are evidence of such specialisation. This in itself is a barrier to the application of instructional leadership. However, one cannot ignore the fact that the application of this leadership requires the people involved to be good communicators, as collaborative and collegial relationships require a great deal of listening (Blase and Blase 2003:133). For me, the success of this leadership, apart from knowledge on curriculum and instruction, is largely dependent on effective communication skills, which also includes (among others), an enabling environment for both parties to express their views freely. I refer to this leadership as “collegial leadership” as it requires the principal to know the teachers in order to interact effectively with them.

This finds support in the view of Shakespeare, who says: “The ability of managers to communicate with their staff does not come out of thin air; it must be based upon a strong knowledge of the people with whom they are communicating” (Shakespeare, as cited in Corrigan 1999:12).

Having discussed leadership theories, I now turn to policies as the guiding tools for the management of schools.

2.9 Management approach as portrayed in policy: the Namibian context

Although there is no specific blueprint on how education systems should be run, what directs the management approach in schools is the constitution of the Namibian government, which stipulates that Namibia is a democratic society, and therefore requires democratic education (Namibia 1993:41). In essence, when it comes to the major goals of education, democracy is listed among equity, access, and quality (Namibia 1993: v). It is in this light of democratisation that the education system is striving to adopt a participatory management approach, by involving all stakeholders such as the teachers, parents, learners and the school board from the planning stage up to the decision-making stage, which requires a multi-directional flow of communication.

This participatory management approach is further stressed by the adoption of a decentralised education system in Namibia. According to Bush (2003:12), “Decentralisation in education means a shift in the authority distribution away from the central ‘top’ agency in the hierarchy of authority”. Although the decentralisation process is not yet finalised, it has been started, characterised by the establishment of education directorates in all thirteen administrative political regions, who have the responsibility of educational planning at regional level. Alternative forms are deconcentration, which is prevalent in Tanzania, and devolution, and participative democracy, which coexist in the Namibian education system. Participatory democracy involves active participation by stakeholders at an institutional level (Bush 2003:12). I think Bush’s observation is lacking a broad view of participation, as for me participatory democracy, relating to schools as open systems interdependent with the outside environment, should also include the external stakeholders, and not just stakeholders at the institutional level. But I concur with the authors of ‘Toward Education for All’, when they say, regarding democracy in an educational setting: “A democratic education system is organised around *broad participation* in decision making and the clear accountability of those who are our leaders” [my italics] (Namibia 1993:41). For me this view takes cognisance of system thinking, which relates to interdependence and which is not institution-limited, as the leaders referred to in this context are none other than the policy makers who are responsible for governing the country.

To devolve, according to the Oxford Concise dictionary (Pearsal 2002:393) means to “transfer or delegate power to a lower level, especially from central government to local or regional administration”. This exactly explains the type of decentralisation happening in Namibia. In the same vein, I would like to add that this shows evidence of moving away from bureaucratic authority towards shared authority, which is in line with the transformational leadership required by this 21st century.

The participatory management approach is exemplified by the cluster system (cluster management meetings) currently operating, where principals in the same district hold meetings to share ideas on matters of concern. At these cluster meetings the inspectors and the advisory teachers would advise, guide and inform the principals on the latest policy issues to keep them abreast of current educational developments. This indicates collaboration among schools, which is, needless to say, beneficial. In my view this is also an indication that the education system acknowledges the importance of communication as one core element for improving and developing the education system. The manifestation of parental meetings, school board meetings, and the formation of learners’ representative councils justify the participatory management approach as recommended.

Neighbouring South Africa, also a formerly colonised country, has moved away from traditional bureaucratic management, and the education system, like the Namibian education, has adopted participatory management. The new policy recommends skills that facilitate networking with other stakeholders and that promote affiliation, which consequently creates participative management (Department of Education 1996:15). Crawford, Kydd and Riches (1997:2) clarify that participative management has been discovered as a vehicle to increase group achievement through heightened team commitment. This brings to mind the idea of harmonising the diversity and uniformity that exists between the governing bodies such as the parents, the school managers and the policy makers. This notion of connectedness, when combined with the South African transformation process calls for a management approach, which is appropriately clarified by the Department of Education (1996:14):

The pace of change, and the need to be adaptable and responsive to local circumstances requires that managers develop new skills and styles of working. They must be capable of providing leadership for teams, and

able to interact with the communities and stakeholders both inside and outside the system. They must be able to manage and use information to promote efficiency and support democratic governance. This blurs the distinction between governance and management in ways that require *frequent communication* between managers and policy makers if both responsiveness and accountability are to be maintained [my italics].

In my view, this statement takes cognisance of the boundaries and the unavoidable exchanges between the inside and the outside environment of an open system, which should be the guiding principle for effective management of schools. In the same vein, the concept of frequent communication for me emphasises the crucial role communication plays in the ensuring of effectiveness and efficiency of open systems by harmonising the needs of the outside environment with the needs and goals of the educational institution. All these factors are in line with systems theory, which sees interrelated parts as a whole making up the system and which cannot be viewed in isolation (French and Bell 1999:82).

However, what is recommended is something different from what is being practiced, as some principals do not include teachers in decision-making, let alone inform them about new circulars (Kaura 2004:12).

The Task Team observation revealed also that the administrative process was seen as an important aspect for management. The challenge now for new policy was to lessen this emphasis (Department of Education 1996:15) and instead to put emphasis on the holistic approach to school development which considers people as one fundamental aspect for bringing about change (*Ibid.*). That is, it is in the same vein that Department of Education (1996:16) emphasised by saying it is crucial “to develop the leadership skills needed to manage people, lead change and support the process of transformation”. Relating this to practice, principals in South Africa, as well as in Namibia, unlike in the past; are being trained in management issues such as human resource management and financial budgeting.

This notion of management is central to transformational leadership, which is highly recommended in educational management today, especially with the transformation process in the South African schools.

In addition, one cannot help but notice that the Task Team Report recommends that managers provide *leadership* for the functioning of the schools (1996:16); this implies that leadership skills have been acknowledged as distinct from managerial skills, yet both are needed for the running of schools.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt was made to define and describe the key concept of the study; communication, followed by two communication theories and models which were found to be relevant to the study. Secondly, an attempt was made to differentiate educational management from other management approaches. Subsequently, an overview of different management theories has been given attention, with emphasis on their implications for management of communication in organisations. In writing about these theories, I looked at their relevance or lack thereof to contemporary management, specifically relating to the educational setting. After distinguishing educational leadership from other styles of leadership, the chapter looks at different styles of educational leadership, simultaneously making an attempt to focus on their communication styles. Management approaches, as portrayed by contemporary policies, conclude the chapter.

I would like to point out that every effort was made to look at communication from the educational perspective, despite the lack of literature. My experience is echoed by Bush and West-Burnham (1994:262). In their own words: “Books which discuss communication in an educational context do not seem to exist, and even references to the subject in educational management texts are quite sparse”.

Having discussed literature on the phenomenon under study, the next chapter looks at the practical side of the study: the actual research process, accompanied as well by a look at relevant literature.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the research process. The departure point is a brief description of different research orientations. This is followed by a discussion of the approach followed in this study, a description of the research design, and finally, a discussion of validity and ethics.

The study follows an interpretive orientation. In order to clarify my position, I outline the two main ontological and epistemological orientations that dominate research in the social sciences, namely positivism and interpretivism.

3.1.1 Positivism

The term “positivism” has its origin in the work of the French philosopher, Auguste Comte (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000:8). Comte believed that the human mind goes through three stages, and that the final stage is when the mind shifts to “scientific” observing and reasoning to gain understanding of the particular behaviour at hand (Cohen *et al.* 2000:9). Thus for a positivist there is a fixed reality “out there” (Bassey 1999:42) to be tested. Realism forms the philosophical basis of this paradigm (Cohen *et al.* 2000:10). This orientation is thus objective and appears value free.

This paradigm take a “stable”, “objective” and “quantifiable” epistemological stance (Merriam 2001:4). Cohen and Manion clarify this by stating that “Positivism may be characterised by its claim that science provides us with the *clearest possible ideal* of knowledge” [my italics] (Cohen and Manion 2000:12); hence positivistic studies often involve statistical data in order to quantify the results. According to Bassey (1999:42):

To the positivist researcher the purpose of the research is to advance knowledge by understanding and describing the phenomena of the world and sharing findings with others. Understanding enables one to explain

how particular events occur and how they are linked in a theoretical structure. It may provide predictions about future events.

From this it is clear that a positivist approach puts one in a position to invent theories, as one systematically follows the process of events in order to understand and be in a position to generate explanations for theories as well as to provide strategies for controlling events. Positivist research finds a home in scientific fields such as medicine and nursing, but could also appropriately have been employed in my study of communication. However, the research would be driven by different goals, such as testing the relationship between variables defined in quantitative terms.

The limitations of the positivist orientation lie therein that it cannot be applied to human actions due to the mere fact that human actions vary in situations and are thus unpredictable, and realities are neither stagnant nor predictable. The interpretive paradigm, on the other hand, was therefore found to be more suitable for describing human action, as it deals with multiple realities.

3.1.2 Interpretive paradigm

Merriam considers qualitative research as an umbrella term for “several forms of inquiry” applied to study phenomena in as natural a setting as possible (Merriam 2001:5). She states that qualitative research has been referred to by various names such as “naturalistic inquiry, interpretive research, field study, case study and ethnography” (*Ibid.*). This view is echoed by Van Maanen as cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (1991:71) who define qualitative methods as an “array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the *meaning*, not the frequency, of certain more or less *naturally occurring phenomena* in the social world” [my italics]. The notion of evaluating “more or less naturally occurring phenomena” suits my study, as communication is widely seen as a naturally occurring phenomenon. This explains why I chose to do an interpretive study, as my research goal was to gain an understanding of teachers’ perceptions of the role of communication (the meaning they attach to communication) in the management of an educational institution. Cohen and Manion also argue that interpretive study is appropriate for the study of “taken-for-granted” behaviour (Cohen and Manion 2000:39), and as mentioned in Chapter 1, communication is one

aspect or behaviour frequently taken for granted, despite its vital function in everyday life.

Unlike the positivist researcher who manipulates the subjects under study in order to get results, as in laboratory experimentation, the interpretive researcher goes into the field as a “talker” and “listener” who asks probing questions to gain understanding. However, this does not imply that s/he does not have preconceived ideas about the study. In my view, being a human being with an unintentional subjective view there is no way that the researcher in this paradigm cannot have preconceived ideas. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 121) who acknowledge the tendency of the interviewer to have preconceived ideas, suggest that it (bias) should be minimized in order to obtain greater validity from the study. This facilitates the interviewees to have the mandate over the data.

Qualitative research has philosophical roots in symbolic interactionism and phenomenology; my study has elements of phenomenology, but does not claim to be a phenomenological study. As with other phenomenological researchers, the main aim of my research was to capture the essence of the “lived experiences” (Fennel 2002:1) of teachers about the phenomena under study, which is,

To gain a deeper understanding of the role of communication in the management of an educational institution. To explore educators' experience and perceptions of organisational communication (Kaura 2004:2).

The notions of “gaining a deeper understanding” and “exploring experiences” exemplify the characteristics of a phenomenological study.

Husserl, being a founder of phenomenology, provides an interesting catch phrase for this research method. He calls it “back to the things”. This to him refers to “how things appear to us” as is not influenced by cultural aspects (Cohen and Manion 2000::30). This catch phrase points out clearly that if you want to find out the core nature of a phenomenon then let the people who “lived it” tell you. This again brings to me the realisation that phenomenological research has a subjective, epistemological as well as a non-fixed, ontological stance, and this make it a value-laden type of approach. It is about

individual, unique perceptions and not about “how it is seen by all”. Giorgi (as cited in van der Mescht 1997: 43) clarifies:

The phenomenological approach admits to a reality independent of consciousness but claims that knowledge of such reality can only occur through consciousness of it, so it is better to study the reality claims made by persons through their consciousness of it. The task here is to understand the reality claims (or non-reality claims) precisely as they are made by the research participants. In other words, it is the *perceived* reality that phenomenologists are interested in, and often ‘distortions’ are more vital than veridical perceptions.

I agree with this view, that participants do not always provide true claims, yet the information given remains their views, which phenomenology solicits. The phenomenologist is distinct from the critical theory researcher, who goes beyond hearing what is being said and tries to figure out why things are the way they are, “confronting the causes”, I would say, in order to bring change. Here the researcher is the constructor of the data based on his/her own observation and perceptions. In contrast, the phenomenological researcher hears and internalises things as they are presented to him/her.

The sense in which this is **not** a phenomenological study is that I have not reduced data to meaning units and searched for the ‘essence’ of participants’ experience and understanding of communication. Rather, through using a more generic form of qualitative data analysis, I have sought to gain a sense of how the respondents as a group perceive communication.

3.2 Why a case study?

It is appropriate to define what is meant by case study, as it will help to show why a case study was suitable for this research. Some call it “the study of the particular” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:438). Yin (in Merriam 2001:27) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. Merriam, on the other hand, asserts, “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit”

(Merriam 2001:27). The definition by Denzin and Lincoln, validates the appropriateness of the selection of this approach, as it investigates one specific phenomenon (communication). Still the definition by Merriam draws attention to the special nature of case study work, in the sense that it gives in-depth information about the phenomenon under study. The characteristics of qualitative case studies as summarised by Merriam (2001:29-30) served as the guiding principles for my research:

Case studies are viewed as particularistic, focusing on a specific, clearly defined aspect such as communication, thus illuminating a general problem. Secondly they are descriptive, meaning they provide rich data, considering the gaining of divergent views from various individuals, yet belonging to one single institution, which is the dream and desire of every researcher. Lastly, case studies are viewed as heuristic, as they explain the reasons for a problem (Merriam 2001:30-31).

For instance, in my case, the barriers to effective communication are elaborated on.

Doing case studies requires a specific approach when it comes to the selecting of study units, and with this in mind I now turn to sampling.

3.3 Sampling

First and foremost, I would like to point out that choosing my case was not a smooth journey. Armed with a letter of introduction from my supervisor (Appendix C) I obtained permission from the Regional Education Officer in the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture in order to do my research (Appendix D). The Development Officer advised me to choose a school where at least I knew the principal, as it would make it easier for me in terms of accessibility as well as support. Based on this advice, I chose a school whose principal was known to me; in fact we were former co-learners in secondary school.

Research sampling is guided by the type of phenomenon to be studied, or as Merriam puts it, the identifying of a research problem paves the way for sampling (Merriam 2001:60). Another guiding principle for my sampling was the research approach. In this case, I adopted an interpretive case study approach, which lends itself to gaining in-depth or rich information. I thus applied both convenience and purposeful sampling for my study. According to Patton (1990:169):

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful* sampling.

Schools are complex organisations in general, and this does not exclude secondary schools, and I thought it likely that such a site would indeed be information rich as regards the role of communication. Six teachers including the principal were selected for interviewing. My sampling is representative of gender balance, as it includes equal numbers of both sexes.

The purpose of the research was to gain deeper understanding and perceptions of the phenomenon under study, and this called for certain techniques to collect data.

3.4 Collecting data

3.4.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were piloted on four teachers from two different secondary schools to check their appropriateness, as well as to ensure that the questions were clear. After adjustments were made the questionnaires (Appendix A) were administered to all the teachers and the principal at the chosen school. Eighteen out of twenty three completed questionnaires were returned. The questionnaire was not the main tool for collecting data, but the rationale behind its use was the selection of five to seven candidates for interviews, based on the richness of their responses. The principal, however, was selected on the strength of his position. The demographic composition of the sample turned out to be quite representative: in terms of gender, there were equal numbers of both sexes and four out of the seven cultural groups at the school were represented. This was, however, coincidental, since gender and culture were not the focus of this study.

3.4.2 Interviews

The selection of my chief data collection tool was guided by the purpose of my study, and since I set out to probe members' perceptions of communication, semi-structured

interviews (Appendix B) seemed the appropriate tool for data collection. According to Patton (in Merriam 2001:72):

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some 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 meanings they attached to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective.

For an interpretive study, the interview can uncover insights as presented by the respondents themselves. The phenomenon of communication involves the expression of feelings and thoughts, which need a process such as interviewing in order to be discovered.

The importance of interviews is further stressed by Burgess (in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe 1991:73):

[the interview]...is the opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply to uncover new clues, open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience'.

This view is in line with my rationale for choosing this data gathering tool, as I wanted to gain deeper understanding of individual experiences of the role of communication in an educational organisation. Easterby-Smith *et al.* caution that the researcher should conduct interviews in such a way that chances are provided to the participants to air their views, as it is the way insights can be gained (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 1991:73). This for me served as a reminder to conduct the interviews along semi-structured lines. The same authors also remind us that the researcher should support the interviewees by "exploring their own beliefs" (*Ibid.*) and this is where probing comes in useful. McClelland (in Easterby-Smith *et al.* 1991:75) points out that using different probing methods is essential as it might reveal divergent responses, which is what I encountered myself when conducting this research.

Furthermore, the use of different methods brings the question of triangulation to the fore. What triangulation entails is outlined by Arksey and Knight (1999:121): “The basic idea of triangulation is that data are obtained from a wide range of different and multiple sources, using a variety of methods, investigators and theories”. Merriam (2001:204) confirms this, maintaining that triangulation is used “to confirm the emerging findings”. These views validate my claim that my study was triangulated: various collecting tools (questionnaires and interviews) were applied in the study; data were collected from multiple sources: the principal as a manager and leader, and the teachers as subordinate staff-members. Further on, Arksey and Knight (1999:121) point out the rationale for triangulation, which has a dual role: for confirmation and completeness. This proves true to my study, as the answers provided to the questionnaire could never provide me with complete views, and if interviews were not conducted, confirmation of data from the questionnaire could not be established. This explains that triangulation in my case was for completeness and confirmation, hence the use of complementary data gathering tools.

Thus, a semi-structured interview format was employed to allow for further probing as well as to get rich responses from the respondents. The interview used was to some extent standardised to ensure that “the same questions are answered by all respondents; thus increasing comparability of responses” (Patton 1990:289). The interviews were conducted in English, a language in which all respondents were conversant. All respondents were asked permission for the use of a tape recorder. All interviews were conducted after hours, either at school or at the researcher’s home as preferred by the respondents themselves. After each interview, respondents were asked to listen to the tapes for confirmation of information given. As interviews were conducted during the time of learners writing examination, some interviewees felt too drained after the interview to listen to the tape-recording, and thus all of them were given transcribed interviews for confirmation of the data. The respondents appreciated this, and responded by either confirming or making minor corrections to the transcripts. This is what is referred to as “member checks” in research, and according to Merriam, it increases the validity of the study (Merriam 2001: 204).

Research is always accompanied by ethical issues, and I now discuss those relevant to my research.

3.5 Ethical issues

It is imperative that the researcher takes into consideration the ethical issues linked to research and tries to avoid any problematic issue which might arise.

Establishing an open and honest relationship with respondents is essential in conducting research. Bassey puts emphasis on respect for persons, by stating that:

Researchers, in taking and using data from persons, should do so in ways which recognise those people's initial ownership of the data and which respect them as fellow human beings entitled to dignity and privacy (Bassey 1999:74).

This view brings to light that respondents are human beings, and need to be treated as such, by acknowledging their individuality as well as their rights to dignity. Bassey further stresses that the researcher should be "truthful" when dealing with the respondents (*Ibid.*). This means that if the researcher states that the information provided will be handled in a confidential way, s/he should keep her word. In my case, respondents were given the purpose of the research, and assured that no names would be revealed. Respondents were also assured that the only person apart from themselves who knew about the site of my study was the Regional Education Officer in the Ministry of Basic Education, as I had to get permission from her as mentioned earlier. They were reminded that anyone was free to withdraw from the study at any time they wished. That this promise was lived up to by the researcher was illustrated by the non-participation of a few teachers, and due respect was applied in this regard.

A related and equally important ethical issue in research is the question of validity.

3.6 Validity

The issue of validity and reliability in case studies is rather debatable. Bassey (1999:74), while acknowledging the essence of validity in research, is of the opinion that validity in

case studies is perhaps unattainable. However, others believe that validity in case studies can be gained through the depth and richness of the data (Winegardner: online).

Lincoln and Guba (in Bassey 1999:75) concur with Bassey's view, but provide an alternative in the form of trustworthiness, which is viewed by Bassey as "successfully illuminating the ethic of respect for truth in case study research".

What these arguments stress is that the onus is on the researcher to produce findings that are rigorous and may be trusted. In an interpretive case study the richness of data would be one of the key ingredients in providing rigour.

In the next chapter I present the data gathered through questionnaires and interviews.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

In the previous chapter, I outlined how the data were collected. The focus of this chapter is to present the data, analysed and grouped into themes. Collected data remain “useless” to the researcher until processed to create meaning, and thus present the data analysis, chiefly guided by my research goals, and research questions. Data presentation comprises pure raw data taken from transcriptions of the taped interviews and from the questionnaires. These are thus triangulated data from the two methods applied for collection. Questions which did not appear in the questionnaire, but from which responses were solicited in the interview, include the following: “How would you describe the flow of communication at your institution?” and “If you think communication needs to be improved at your institution, what would you suggest for improving it?” With this type of question in mind, the reader is reminded that my intention was to explore teachers’ experience and perceptions of the role of communication in the management of an educational institution.

In line with ethical decisions discussed earlier, I use pseudonyms for the respondents. For identification purposes, the principal has been referred to as Wesley; all the others are teachers. Even the school where the research was conducted remains anonymous. This is in line with the agreement I had with the participants.

As communication is a complex phenomenon, it is not surprising to note that divergent responses emerge from the study, ranging from communication as a means for instruction, used in social relationships, for sharing and teamwork. It also emerges as a means of leadership, relating to various leadership roles such as developing/empowering, sharing vision, and bringing about change.

Thematising remains the crucial pre-requirement for data presentation. Through the process of thematising, various issues arose, and these include the following: functioning of the school; relationship with others; multi-culturalism; involvement; sharing; enabling environment; empowerment/developing others; team-work/ownership; shared

vision/goals; change; and leadership styles. While I present the data under these categories as sub-headings, it is important to note that separating the rich data into distinct categories has been carried out in order to make sense of the data, and is not meant to imply that these themes are not inter-related.

4.1 Functioning of the school

Respondents referred to the role of training in procedures at the school. Nadia felt that communication was important, referring to how the calculation of learners' marks could be different because all teachers had not undergone the same training:

I will do it my way, the way I was trained, and you will do it your way, the way you were trained and at the end we will come up with results which differ from the same school. At the end, we will end up sending different result to the parents which will be questioned in a big way by the parents. It will give an impression that obviously there is no communication at the school. Communication in that sense is very important.

Almost in the same vein, but on a slight different tack, Peter had this to say referring to how the functioning of a school could be affected by an induction programme or lack of it:

One very, very crucial thing that didn't happen to me is ... So, people are assuming that I will probably just fit in anywhere but, you know, I think it's very, very important to have an induction programme for anyone, whether you have been teaching for twenty years or not, because every institution has its own way of doing things. It is through the induction programme that one gets to know how an organisation is functioning what is its goals, rules and all other activities. Knowing all these will guide where you actually fit in the system.

Relating to the goals of the organisation, Lydia argued:

...how can the staff-members be aware of such a goal if it is not communicated to them? If they don't know what is expected from them? Then they won't be able to reach that goal. Yes, otherwise they won't really have the purpose of...there won't be really an incentive to do what they are doing.

From the responses it is very apparent that knowing about their expectations serves as a guiding principle for the smooth running of the school. Various responses reveal this:

But now management of education itself, in that me as a teacher should know what is expected from above through communication and the learners below me should also know what I am expecting from them... something like that. So whatever I have to convey to them should be clear, so that they should understand exactly what I expect them to do, something like that. (Mary)

The principal (Wesley) agreed on the role of expectations in effective communication, not only related to the institution, but also to the external environment such as the parents and the government:

An institution like a school has got expectations. Expectations from parents, expectations from learners, expectations from teachers and above all expectations from the employing institution, which is the Ministry. So these expectations have got to be put in terms each one of the members of the school will understand...for management to relay these expectations to the other parts of an institution it takes place through a communication process whether it's through meeting or whether it's through circulars or whether it's through letters or whether it's through notes.

Wesley considered equality when it comes to information-sharing to be important, as it created common understanding among all parties involved. In this regard he stated:

The moment that it is an expectation on the kids its also an expectation on the parents because parents must make sure that kids come to school at seven o'clock.

Even every second week, there is a note going out to the parents about specific things happening in school.

So these kids I don't think they have got really the knowledge as to what they expect of teachers. It's just the same as parents. Parents do not know as to when should a teacher cover a syllabus, by what time, how many chapters. And how many modules and so on. They don't know because they are not well informed, okay?

That is why we have parent-teacher meeting to tell them what we as a school want to do to your kids. How we want to serve you through teaching your kids. That's how we put it to them. (Wesley)

And Mary expressed similar views:

When we are at school, we are dealing with a triangle. Meaning that there are three groups of people; the teachers, learners and the parents. So we are dealing at school with people's children and those people should be

informed what we are doing with their children except for teaching in class, that's what they know.

Peter saw his task of being a teacher in broad perspective, referring to government objectives that need to be communicated to them as teachers so that they can implement them:

There are also political objectives that people want to achieve like Vision 2030, which says everyone must be literate by the year 2030. You see, everyone must be literate and all these things, so those visions must be communicated to us and we as teachers should feel that this is part of our calling. It's a national vision. So, and educational institutions are also for the nation and they are imparting knowledge to the younger generation.

Mary again asserted the importance of being informed as crucial to staff-members:

The teachers would not know what to do if they are not communicated to, that is now regarding any school activities. So, therefore no progress will be made in whatever you want to achieve.

Various responses reflected why communication was seen as central to the functioning of the school, viewing it as the key to facilitate implementation of activities:

Communication is the key...in fact wherever you have people working together, they have to communicate. Communication should be the very first thing in the morning. something that should be done before activities take place. (Lydia)

Like I said before, communication is this, the only key that you would know what the other person wants, you know? (Mary)

Communication ...is the key, I need to know the motives of the decision taken for me to agree, to disagree. For example, if you intend to let the learners go out at 12 hours on a specific day, I should know for what reason because time is allocated for each subject and each period and I might be busy. So if you do not give me your motives, why the school is going out earlier today, I will have a problem with that. (Nadia)

If I come up with a proposal and the management do not give me feedback on that, I would not actually know whether they like my proposal or they rejected. This will create situation of doubt, as I am not informed. (Peter)

In the same vein as Nadia, Peter also had this to say, emphasising being readily informed as crucial:

In the middle of your teaching you hear: "All the learners go to the school hall" Now you are like, "But I am in the middle of a lesson, now I must come and repeat this whole lesson tomorrow, but where to start... Yes, not readily being informed is a problem.

Nadia and Alphonso concurred with Peter that the principal should give information in advance, for example the day before, and as Alphonso put it, "before the information expires". Although all of them viewed the morning caucus as effective when it comes to being readily informed, they all found it too short, sometimes leading to issues left hanging:

We have got everyday a morning caucus and everyone one raises what is on their minds. Of course the time is very short. Most of the time is information but whenever there is something and it seems to be talked about it's always raised the following day... (Wesley)

Ja, the time is short...you have the management informing the teachers about the daily activities, we don't really have the time to respond. Ja, there is not enough time to discuss. The morning meetings is only ten minutes, very short. (Lydia)

Ja...the morning caucus is also kind of effective but sometimes...that is where people don't talk and there where is ineffectiveness comes in. Only the management is giving the information on that and that... But generally it is effective. (Peter)

Yes, even in the staff meeting or morning meetings. There is not enough time allocated in this meeting so that everybody can discuss his or her problems and that means discussions of some problems just get postponed and postponed... and the problem remains. (Mary)

Staff-meetings are effective because you know, things are spoken on the floor...Everybody has got the opportunity to speak up (Wesley)

Still on meetings, two of the respondents felt that there was a need for more and longer meetings.

Normally the staff meeting is held once a term, after school and teachers leave meetings earlier for other personal commitments and some matters end up not being discussed. So that means only prioritised problems are discussed. More time should be allocated to the meetings so that all problems can be discussed and solved (Mary)

We have to have regular meetings, for example a meeting of two hours, two times a month or something in that line, because currently we have

only one meeting a term, unless something come up. As staff-members sometimes we do have problems that we do need to inform the management or other teachers before you even forget what your thought is. (Nadia)

Alphonso and Nadia felt that allocation of tasks required informing the relevant person to ensure implementation as well as effective communication:

For example, if the principal wants a specific teacher to do a specific task and that information goes to that specific teacher...that means that communication is effective. (Nadia)

That will affect the flow of information. Immediately when you are not going to relevant person. It's like trying to talk about literature to a baby. You are not actually reaching to that person. (Alphonso)

Mary and Nadia took it a step further by emphasising that whatever was communicated should be clear and understandable:

And even management of the school which is the HODs and the principal should also be very clear in what they want, whether ... say or giving it in a writing form or instructions, what is conveyed should be very clear, so that I should exactly understand what they want, you see? (Mary)

You might give me the information and I might not grip the information or I might not understand the information... It might be the language...it might be the sentence structure, it might be.. the information is just unclear. [People]...will not understand what you mean...so the meaning of task...the understanding of the meaning of any given task. Information if understood, leads to tasks correctly done. (Nadia)

When comes to the flow of communication, four of the respondents made it categorically clear that it was multi-directional.

The flow is first...if these official matters it comes from the principal it goes to the HODs and then it goes into the departments. That's how it works and if ...the formal problems. If you have to launch a complaint formally you go through your HOD it goes to the principle it goes to the director it goes to the PS [Permanent Secretary] it goes to the...to the Minister. For me it is normal because you see it is vertical, top-down and down-top and I ... I...it is horizontal when it is among the peers and stuff like that and for me it is quite effective (Peter)

Of course information is both horizontal and vertical. It's vertical when it comes to people talking to each other in management meeting in departmental meetings. But then of course is horizontal; teachers talk to

one another, management talk to one another, management talk to teachers just on an equal basis. (Wesley)

Alphonso echoed the same opinion saying that communication is very good, because it is both “top-down” and “bottom-up”. On the other hand, others had divergent opinions about the flow of communication:

It is more from the top-down then from the staff-members. The management are the people who communicate more or give more information to the staff-members then vice-versa. Maybe it is because of the time, we have only one staff-meeting per term and it does not really give enough time for teachers to communicate. (Lydia)

[An]other problem is that the teachers don't get the opportunity to say what they want to say... Mostly the communication is downwards...from above... (Mary)

Or problem is imposing something on others... Management imposing a decision on teachers. On planning for example we have specific thing on a particular day then the management come up with an idea, but now you – you are also a thinking being... Now you says, there is an obstacle, for an example the one good example at this school is that the learners were writing visual arts, so visual arts takes 5 hours, that means they must start at 8 o'clock to 1 o'clock without a break for example. That is imposing a decision on someone without really consulting or looking at all the variables, all the unknown things that might happen within that given situation. If all grades could have written visual arts on the same day, this chaos of other learners could have been avoided. (Peter)

Wesley had a divergent view from Peter stating that he did not make decisions without involving others:

Not really. Ja, of course some staff will possibly see it like that but it's not always the case because whatever decision I take, I take either with the staff or with management. And if management take a decision, it's not just me it's the four of us.

Yes. So of course I am the one making sure that this decision taken goes out to the colleagues and then of course everyone possibly think “Oh, it's him taking the decision. It's a management decision. It's a collective decision that we always take so but of course there could be decisions that one has to take at the expense of the feeling of so many others. In an organisation like this one it has got to happen.

4.2 Relationship with others

Respondents viewed relationships with others being established and facilitated by communication; thus the focus on how they communicated with each other was vital for good working relationships. Mary maintained that “people do not think the same way or agree on things the same and that is why “you should explain yourself, so that the other person can get your point of view why you are doing this and work like ...”

Lydia echoed the same view, but with emphasis on respect.

We think different so we don't expect people to have the same opinion on certain issues, that is why respect is needed...to respect another person way of thinking.

To avoid misunderstandings and animosity Mary had this to say:

If you don't like certain ways people say or do things to you, you have to inform that person, how you feel about that, so that person become aware of your likings and dislikes and consequently changes her way of interaction with you.

Nadia echoed the same view:

For example in a working environment, when you had a quarrel among each other, you disagree... people take it differently, so if am angry because of what you have done to me, I need to tell you that I was angry because of this otherwise you will do the same thing and you make me angry again.

In the same vein Peter had the following to say, but with emphasis on trust:

Because if I communicate with you because I can trust you and I can understand... I know that if I tell you this that I didn't like it you'll take it better than anyone else...then you become a better person at the end of the day. That is what communication does.

To Wesley the point was finding joint solutions to problems:

These communication, whether there is agreement or disagreement ultimately leads you to that solution...then that's a healthy communication. (Wesley)

To Peter communication regarding working relationships created more than just being colleagues; it established friendship which consequently could lead to the birth of better communication and viewing each other as source of support:

Communication is like the yeast in flour...it raises the cake. ...develops...the interpersonal skills. It develops the working relationship. It develops the friendship...it nurture a good working relationship and it mature also all the parties involved. As colleagues we become friends and friends work together better ...than colleagues because colleagues are brought about by their profession. We now communicate in such a way that there is good relationship between you and me.

Like Peter, Wesley viewed communication as a crucial element for nurturing relationships which create sources of support but he went beyond that as he highlighted the importance of a two-way communication and trust in a working relationship:

For you to nurture a relationship between two people there has got to be a two-way communication. Also communication can foster some trust between two people when you always communicate and converse on so many issues there are times that you...that the level of your communication brings you up to this level of confidential communication. You start talking to someone about your confidential things. So the other person becomes a library.

Lydia on a slightly different tack referred specifically to the relationship between management and staff-members and how knowing each other better can contribute to the efficient functioning of the school:

I think it is very important for the management to socialise with the rest of the staff. so they need to know what is going on in the staff-members life. So we think it is very important to socialise and to get to know each other better, and you know, this relieve tension. Then you become helpful towards each other when dealing with any problem. By that I mean not to know somebody just by his name, but where they comes from, their dreams, interest, their hobbies and so on. If I know your interest, it makes easy for me to assign task, for example if there is extra-mural activities, then I will assign to you an activity which is in your interest.

Like Lydia, Peter saw the relationship with others as central to the functioning of an organisation, but he went a step further by emphasising that colleagues can serve as sources to complement each other, only if they do communicate:

We are in this institution and now because we are communicating we are now starting to have certain things that I like about you...certain strengths that I see in you and certain strengths that I see that compliment my weaknesses... So from there we become friends. If you don't talk to one another it can remain like that for days and it can affect your productivity.

To Mary, informal greetings paved the way of establishing good relationships with others, and thus facilitate further communication.

Any informal greetings creates a sense of approachability and it facilitates discussions of any serious matters. When you greet another colleague in an informal way and that responds back, that means the other person opens up to you...

Two respondents referred to specific examples of how relationships among teachers could be ruined through the way teachers relate to learners:

Because if you go around in the class and then you talk to your students and say, "Ah that one is whatever, whatever..." The students will turn round and say, "Ah even Miss who and who said Miss who is like that and that." That will then that uh...even the students themselves won't respect that person. That they hate even that person. (Alphonso)

If we are having a personal friction, you don't talk about it about what's happening between you and me to the learners because the way you conduct yourself in front of those learners shows disrespect towards my professionalism you see. So the learners are losing respect for the other one. (Peter)

After all (negative and positive) had been said, Nadia concluded:

...there is a good communication between the staff-members and the management and between the learners and the management.

4.2.1 Diverse cultural setting

Being members of a multi-cultural organisation, respondents argued that there were challenges to communication, relating to classroom teaching as well to among the staff-members themselves. Here are some of their views:

What I would say about this is that, we get Portuguese learners who had never been exposed to Afrikaans or English, which means they have poor command of both languages. That makes it very difficult to get through to them when teaching. (Mary)

We had learners coming from the north especially who do not speak English well. Others are Portuguese learners who cannot speak English. They have problem of expressing themselves in English. (Nadia)

Still on the language issue, Wesley had this to say:

Just talk about Afrikaans. “Jy” in Afrikaans is a rude word but “You” in English is a very polite word. You know, it’s a polite word. Now if in Afrikaans because of the language situation where kids are more used to English and they speak to me in Afrikaans and they say “Jy”, it’s a problem...

Wesley is culture-sensitive; being a manager of the school does not mandate him to communicate to everyone as he likes:

You have got to be sensitive. In our African culture when you are talking to a teacher who is older than you, you don’t scream on that person even if you are the manager of that person you don’t scream on that person. Because the seniority...the age...supersedes your relationship...your official relationship with them.

On the other hand Nadia condemns the use of language which is not understandable to all in formal gatherings as it can create isolation:

Regarding the staff-members there will be staff-members speaking their own language even during a meeting if they disagree with what has been said, they would not respond in English. You feel left out, you feel that something bad has been said, because if it is not something bad then it could have been said in English. For me it is normal to speak to someone in the staff-room in my language provided that person understand my language. But when comes to meetings, morning caucus or something formal then it is not really a good thing, but it does happen.

Peter echoed the same view saying that the principal discouraged the use of the vernacular as it led to the forming of cliques based on tribes:

But the principal is kind of you know encouraging us to speak in English instead of vernacular language. So that we don’t create cliques and stuff like that...And that creates also gossip groups...then you don’t work together if you gossip a lot...ja, it creates division.

4.3 Involvement

All respondents viewed the involvement of all members as essential to school functioning, especially when it comes to decision-making. They considered that their contribution could lead to better solutions and prevention of members' "withdrawn" attitude. Even the involvement of parents came out prominently.

To Nadia lack of involvement in decision-making equaled lack of action:

We should all take decisions together... so when you take that decisions then it is a holistic decision taken by everybody or the majority. And if people are not considered in decisions, they normally retaliate...they withdraw, that is what I mean by retaliate...they will not take action.

Peter, however, acknowledged that there are some decisions where the principal does not need to consult teachers:

For example there are decisions, like suspensions of kids... he can take it by himself...(Peter)

Nadia argued that it was only when people were communicated to about decisions that they understood why they approved or condemned a specific decision. In the same vein, she stressed that approval and disapproval goes along with revelation of emotions.

If you communicate to people about certain decisions to be taken, people...always either support or disagree, giving their reasons. Emotions will be expressed.

To Peter, schools in this era are supposed to be managed in a democratic way, and that means that involvement is manifested by broad participative management including school governing bodies. He expressed the view that education management had moved from a top-down communication structure to more collaborative management:

The colonial time..during that time all decisions were made at upper levels and just told to the subordinates. Communication is not like that...it is about informing me what we are going to do, proposing what we must do and get also get feedback so that I can contribute. Telling someone what to do is like a military type of communication. In military, you do not say "no", you just say "yes".

One important subject that I maybe forgot was the LRC... the Learners' Student Council. They are also responsible to communicate all the problems that the learners are having. They are responsible for bringing

about proposals that the learners have. It's like a link ...the whole structure... and then we have the school board. So the LRC are responsible they are like the gap between the teachers and the learners.

The school board is the highest decision making body ... [The school board does hold meetings] twice a term, yes. So their [LRC] views are... being aired there. For example, the school board has now taken a decision to suspend a learner. So the LRC can mobilise the whole school and say that, "No, we don't think that that is the reason why a certain ...individual must be expelled.. You see ... it depends on the...if that person [LRC representative] is weak that means the whole information or the whole chain of the learners will not be represented. You know, the LRC ...they are part of this whole decision, so it's like empowering structure ...the...democratic...because most of the school are now managed in a democratic way, you know, so...That means...that is the structure...the structure on paper looks like that. Um...my understanding on that one...that means everyone has an input in the decisions. (Peter)

To support what he expects to be doing to illustrate involvement, Peter provided an example relating to his classroom teaching:

Another example is when a parent is having a problem with my style of teaching, then the principal is the only one who must intervene and deal with this issue. That is not good, because we want to be part of the whole system the whole decision-making structure, so that we can know what to do in every situation and document it for future reference.

Nadia supported Peter's argument, believing democracy to be the guiding principle for school management. She stressed that non-involvement for her displays being "not a valuable" person in the working environment, and consequently led to anger and a feeling of being compelled:

When information is not communicated, it makes people who are working at the organisation angry. And it sends a sense of ...you are not valued, or you are not a valued aspect at the school. That is why information should be imposed on you. You are forced to do things. You take it as a force. If you are not involved in a decision taken, then you feel like people are just forcing you to do things that you are not agreeing with. Now we are in a free democratic country, where all of us are free to express and to accept what we want and to object to what we do not want.

Mary, like Peter, viewed communication as a two-way process, chiefly guided by wanting to know what all parties have to say:

The management can say whatever they want: for me it does not work like that. It should work vice versa, they should want to know what problems we have, and we want to know what problems they have so that we can get to a common ground where we can understand each other.

When it comes to involvement, Alphonso pointed out the importance of teachers being considered in curriculum development, and not just being the executors:

You see, curriculum designing and implementation is a broad thing...if you are ...designing something and you give it to people... "Go and implement that" ...What is that? We are the people experiencing everything here. What do they know? They don't know that. It's like you are told to implement something, it might not be good to you as a teacher, you know that this might create this and this might create chaos, but them, they will say: "Implement it".

In my own expectation, the only way I would like it to be done. I want to be part and parcel of the deciding committee.

Nadia viewed involvement in communication as an indication where one fits in the system, like the educational system:

If you communicate to people, it gives a "fit" feeling, for example if I know why a certain learner was not at school, if you give me that opportunity to explain or to inform the colleagues about that, then I give my contributions to a decision through my opinions and feelings, but if I don't explain that will be to the disadvantage of the learner. We all want to contribute for a school to exist... for school to function in a good way.

Wesley felt that involvement in decision-making was a feature of the school. He also highlighted that sometimes if consensus cannot be reached, he as the manager should then take a decision:

Then of course a decision has got to be taken... if a decision cannot be taken on a consensus basis, of course the principal as the manager will have to take the final decision. But most of the time I don't really take decisions like that. Most of the time I go with majority feeling. But then of course, some staff will possibly see it like that but it's not always the case because whatever decision I take, I take either with the staff or with management (HODs). And if management take a decision, it's not just me it's the four of us. Yes. So of course I am the one making sure that this decision taken goes out to the colleagues and then of course everyone possibly think "Oh, it's him taking the decision. It's a management decision." It's a collective decision that we always take so, but of course

there could be decisions that one has to take at the expense of the feeling of so many others. In an organisation like this one it has got to happen.

4.4 “We are not an island...”

Respondents saw communication as a means to share their needs, problems, ideas on how the school might function better, as well as their teaching experiences. Hence the views expressed of being dependent on each other. Various responses reflected that especially informal communication served as a means of sharing knowledge and experiences:

It is through informal communication that we get to know how your colleague explained or handled certain aspects with learners of which you are unsure. (Mary)

It provides the opportunity to share openly their daily experience in classrooms...and they share the methods and ideas they use to deal with “problem-kids”. and also to find out whether the learner's behavioural pattern remain the same in all classrooms or not and so that you can try to find solutions together, because the problem might be due to non-academic factors. (Lydia)

Peter echoed the same views as Mary and Lydia:

The other part of the informal communication for example um... I am going down to the office. I tell my colleague, “Could you please keep an eye on my learners?” And then at the same time it’s helping. The colleague will know that he has to keep on eye on that and it is not an order it is a favour, you know, and that will help, you know, the learners to do their work because they know the teacher can help them they are not alone.

While Wesley stressed the power of informal communication:

Because we do not always have time to talk formally and say when to meet, to have meetings. We have got corridor meetings.... we have got by-the-way meetings. We have got small informal notes to ...from me to a teacher, from one teacher to another...word send ...communication by word, sending a kid to other teacher. And the flow of the things just continues happening. It is very effective because of the time constraints that we have...(Wesley)

Informal communication as a sharing mode of communication was found to be a vehicle for creating healthy relationships:

It enables people to agree and disagree. The moment that people disagree, it is a very healthy relationship...because (than) I can say what I want to say as long as I say it in a decent, polite and respectful manner.

To Wesley, sharing went along with confiding in someone, even if it was just about academic issues and he stressed that that person remained a constant source of advice:

You know if you have confided in someone and said “My dear, I have got a problem with this learner in class. This learner the other day said this bad thing to me. I don’t have the guts to go and tell the principal about this. How do you advise me?” This colleague will advise that person. The next day when this learner repeats such behaviour towards her, this teacher will not go to any other person but to the library where he got the first advice that possibly worked out.

Wesley saw sharing as a fundamental aspect to interpersonal communication. To him, sharing was not limited to sharing knowledge or experiences: it was about creating unity which consequently could nurture the relationships:

For you to go out of your way to put the effort in to make something for twenty-four teachers, for all the staff members to eat. If you do not bring, you have got a problem because we have nurtured a culture of sharing. So the moment that it is your Friday...you didn’t bring it...There is a problem then you don’t have that culture of sharing. You don’t have that culture of that oneness that one wants to create.”. Absolutely the relationship that one is nurturing.

Lydia viewed the school as part of a ‘circle’ of educational institutions; hence the emphasis on interdependence, manifested by sharing that is not institution limited.

We are not an island... we are in the same Ministry...so we need to share information at schools.

In the same vein of sharing, relating to the role of the manager regarding communication, she had this to say:

He is there to give information and to listen to the information. Whether it is information from the Ministry or from the community. He is also there to make connection with other institutions like other schools... for example when we need textbooks...instead of waiting for the Ministry to

provide, we can ask from the neighbouring schools if they can help us out, in case they have extra textbooks.

Looking at the negative side of informal communication, Alphonso and Peter felt that it depended on what type of information was being shared, as some does not contribute to the effective management of the school.

It depends sometimes on what you are talking about... if you are bad mouthing somebody in the corridors, I wouldn't say that is effective. It's not... it's not good. I mean why should one bad mouth the other person?. Just, at first it will be affected in such a way that it is not reaching the relevant people. That will create a lot of tension. (Alphonso)

The informal communication that is going around here is pure gossip...like at our school, I don't think the informal communication is good...from the experience that I have... (Peter)

Wesley had the same view, but he went a step further by stressing that unkind remarks sometimes should be paid attention to and sometimes not:

Even at times when you hear some people talk negatively about you, no, not about you about something...Ja, about an organisation and you think that they have got a point in it. They have got a point although negative, but a valid point. You decide which one of them you want to talk to. And say, "Well I was hearing that thing... maybe you have got a point...tell me why are you saying this?" And then take it from there. No, absolutely at times you have got to lend your ears and at times you don't...you must not lend out your ear. That is one technique that I have learnt. I listen when I need to listen. (Wesley)

4.5 "Communication is that gap...that empowers"

Three respondents had high awareness that the teaching profession went along with being empowered, yet empowering meant a different thing to each of them. Despite their divergent views on what empowerment was, what they had in common was that communication was the vehicle for the empowering process.

To Peter the empowering process led to the birth of independent, creative and innovative persons, knowing how to handle situations. Having the freedom of choice as a teacher when it comes to clothing, for example, to him meant being empowered:

"What is communication?" Communication is that gap of...of empowering... That gap that empowers, you know. That gap that

informs... That is what I mean by gap. I even have the independence to add on certain things ...to be creative, to be innovative in implementing certain strategies and rules or plans. But if I'm just there to receive orders...and I'm just looking up and I say, "oh...what you are giving me does not work, because you haven't empowered me" ...I cannot think innovatively or creatively in order to solve the particular problem.

To Wesley, talking obviously from the management perspective, empowering was about nurturing and mentoring teachers through task delegation:

The moment that you task someone to carry out something you have already empowered that person with confidence in himself. But then the moment that person is carrying out that activity you have given him, his experience in itself is an empowerment already for him because at the end of the day it'll remain with him. He will do it today. He can repeat it next year. And so on. Ja, of course that's a whole developmental process that at the end of the day aims at empowering individuals. So his knowledge, his skills must be nurtured such that he contributes towards the organisation, towards the development of that organisation.

It is apparent that Wesley was sometimes dismayed that teachers saw delegation of tasks to them as just being used as implementers, when he (Wesley) meant to develop them through that delegation:

"Mr. X is just passing on the task to me", but not knowing or realising that possibly that he is trying to develop you. Preparing you for a future management position that you may possibly apply for.

4.6 Communication is a development tool

Wesley viewed communication as a development tool, with emphasis on a two-way communication:

Of course you reward through communication. You praise through communication. You even at times criticise through communication ...There are times that the management has to appraise the staff and then of course, you have to have one to one session where you give your feedback and get an opinion from the appraised person... after your appraisal you sit down and say, "What do you think? Tell me about the lesson." You allow them to self assess themselves and feedback you with this self-assessment whether it is positive or negative ...

4.7 Teamwork/Ownership

Just as with empowerment, respondents had different views on what team work and ownership entailed. But again they saw communication as the only means for creating teamwork which they stressed contributes to the effective management of the school. According to Mary, there were many activities at school which they as teachers should consult about as a team:

Examination...it can be discipline at school, it can be teaching, maybe someone informs you how to do it better, or something like that... usage of funds, something like that. So it is different things at school, you have to talk about as a team. Sometimes you even forget as a person some things which are very important, while others remember and can inform everybody.

Peter echoed these views about teamwork, but to him it leads to the birth of ownership.

To Peter joint-planning and joint-responsibility are the roots of teamwork:

You see, and that is also one very important thing – the planning part. The whole thing is we communicate to each other about our ideas, then at the end of the day we decide on one best solution... because we all came up with this thing, it brings about joint responsibility...and also it creates effective communication, and ownership also. And once you feel empowered you feel the ownership of that particular thing ...And when you feel ownership you would like to guard what is yours. So...when this thing fails, then we know, okay, we planned it together.

Further on, Peter maintained that being part of a team goes beyond classroom teaching and did not end with “just” talking: action was required:

Because I am part of the team and I think ... I just won't feel like I'm just there, I just teach mathematics, I feel part of, you see like this is the overall game... at the same time I have got other activities such as ...um...extra-mural activities... being part of the team means that I must look for ways and means that will help us achieve these ...all activities. ...Communication is also not just talking. For example, when I do an activity well, that has to communicate about my individual professionalism. It says a lot, you see. So me doing things without moaning and complaining and stuff like that, it says a lot about my character. Communication is that gap of ... taking ownership.

Lydia had a different view about being part of a team. To her, it meant not just being there, but being recognised by others as a team-member through individual contribution.

She also considered the school as a community where one was appreciated through one's involvement:

Through daily contact, the way people recognise your contribution, that means they do appreciate that you are being there...that you are one of them.

4.8 Shared vision/goals

Peter could not imagine a school without a vision. To him, there should be a vision which should serve as a guiding principle for the activities to be carried out:

I believe that if you don't have a vision then...you are doing nothing. If you don't have a vision what you want to achieve then you actually...you are nowhere...What is it you want to achieve?.

Peter also stressed a vision having a departure point in the leader, but it should be shared with other staff-members in such a way that they embrace the vision and take ownership of it:

He is the main custodian of the vision, the execution of all the duties that can...that can make sure that the vision has been achieved. The leader has this vision for the school and now he communicates this ...there is now that communication between him...his own communication. You know, like you are communicating to yourself, you know, your soul your mind, your body, your thinking... all these things towards that vision and then you communicate that to that...these ones are relating back to these ones. After having a vision then you must convince people, not actually convince people, but you must share your vision with others and they feel being part of that particular institution they will now feel that this is the vision and then from there you can put to...the team can now say, "Can you not add this to this vision so that this can relate to a national vision." And these are now all communicative ...we are now talking here...we are communicating in written...verbally...we are communicating with our attitudes we are communicating with our work, we are communicating with everything that we've got....

So, if you communicate your visions and back them up with relevant reasons that means ... and you communicate in such a way that the staff feels part of this whole vision; that means ...Then they get ownership of that vision and then they feel like they own the whole vision together, and they feel ... and it creates this bigger picture of teamwork and effectiveness, and everyone is, like, is driven towards that goal.

It was very obvious that Peter had a vision close to his heart as he indicated what his institutional vision entailed and that having a vision was not the end in itself but there had to be strategies how to achieve it:

Let me just take our own vision. Our vision ... the bottom ... look, as we call it, we call it 'the bottom line'. We want to achieve a 100 per cent pass rate in every grade, in all the subjects, for all learners. That is what we want to achieve. That is like our bottom line. This is what we are striving for ...every academic year.

I believe that if you have a vision, that means you must also have strategies and plans how to achieve or to attain that vision... And that information should be fed back to the whole group

To Lydia vision was related to goals, and all of these needed to be communicated to the staff-members by management, as according to her realisation of goals was non-existent without the involvement of staff-members. She also echoed Peter, stressing that the vision should be communicated to the staff-members in such an effective way that it attracted their desires and cooperation:

[The management] need the staff-members to achieve the goals, without effective communication educational institution itself cannot achieve its goals. Let's say every institution has got a vision... what the institution wants to achieve, and that goal should be made clear to everybody...to all the stakeholders... because a goal should direct you. If it is not communicated to you, you won't reach it, because you are not aware of it. One of the goal should be to improve the image of the school, so that it can be the best school in all the aspects, and that should be communicated. The vision should be clearly communicated by the management to the staff-members, so that it creates desires for the staff-members to cooperate.

4.9 Change

Two respondents viewed schools as dynamic institutions, bound to experience change. To them, the materialisation of change needed the required changes to be communicated to all affected parties. Alphonso viewed teaching as guided by what was going on in the external environment; hence he emphasised change as an aligning with the outside environment:

Everybody should be informed what is going on in this dynamic world. You see education is a process of teaching and learning. Every day the

environment changes and that means we have to teach things relevant to the environment. It means that everyone have to be involved within the change itself... Within the change itself, in order to learn, because you will find that the syllabus, for example, which was used in previous years is actually different from the new syllabus which is being used now. When you know the framework of how things are, that is when you will contribute. But if you don't know, how will you contribute to change? And that will mean that the communication itself is kind of breaking down somehow.

Relating to the role of the manager regarding communication, Alphonso saw the manager as the initiator of change by informing and facilitating the whole change process:

The manager is the one; he can uh...sometimes change stuff. So he is the main administrator of information... you'll find that if the syllabus has changed again, he is the one who is supposed to come and tell you that, "No, I just got the message this and that has to be changed." If he did not inform, you would be using a previous or using the same syllabus.

Mary, like Alphonso, argued that schools could never be stagnant institutions. But she found to her dismay that old teachers were not accommodative to proposed changes by new teachers. It is in this light that she stressed that all members should be open-minded to whoever proposed the change:

It is important for the staff-members to realise that people think differently, and that means that they should be open-minded to other people's ideas. Staff members should also be open minded to changes. What I have noticed, old teachers don't like ideas which are being brought by new teachers.

4.10 Leadership

Peter showed high levels of awareness of different leadership styles. He made it quite clear that he found problems with leaders whose action was only to demonstrate or to instill in the minds of subordinates that they were the ones actually in leading positions. He preferred a democratic leader with whom he could have two-way communication:

Ah, there are various styles... leadership styles, one guy is a laissez-faire type... The one is autocrat, the one is democrat, stuff like that you know... leadership style is like a nature of a person, how he leads. For example, I can communicate well with someone who gives me freedom. That means I would like to have a democratic leader who will give me freedom to think and give him feedback and stuff like that. So if a person is autocrat, you know how he looks at the system?, like... like at the

circular of the ministry and put it: The ministry says: all teachers males must not wear sandals. Autocrats will say: These are the rules, you are not supposed to wear that. They do not look at the merit of every case, so that can be a barrier in communication. Also you don't look at the relevance and merit of every situation. That bring barriers. ...you are put down, you cannot do anything. So you are, like, not that effective. Because your personality... it is, like, suppressive, and degrading and stuff like that. If you suppressed my thinking, that brings a barrier in a way I will communicate to you, because all I will do is, I just do task A and do task B without really having a link between task A and task B. Absolutely, you are not innovative at the end of the day, because of a particular leadership style or a personality.

That element is brought by ...some people says that they are born leaders, groomed leaders and stuff like that. I am having a problem with people who are just carrying the title...because they carry the title, they say to themselves: "I have to do this so that my subordinates can feel that I am having the title, and that is not leadership, you see."

Leadership to Peter meant predictability and consistency along with the ability to empower others, lifting them up to a level where subordinates also acted as leaders in the absence of their leaders:

Leadership for me is about empowerment....the leader must empower his subordinates; subordinates should get the sense that they are being empowered, so that they can be able to handle any situation.

Absolutely. And that means also that in the absence of the leader, the subordinates should be able to handle any situation as they have learned from how their leader deals with it. This only happens when the leader is predictable and consistent in his doings, why these two elements are crucial is because they tell the subordinates how their leader go about doing things, and then they follow suit. That is what we expect in leaders: predictability and consistency.

4.11 "You create an enabling environment for people to communicate freely"

An environment where all people can communicate openly and freely was the desire of every respondent. Despite having this in common, it is quite interesting to note that how differently everyone described an enabling environment.

To Wesley, what mattered most was the availability of a person to be communicated to, particularly referring to himself as a manager and with awareness of the prescribed communication channels:

You don't have to trust in someone to have a smooth communication with that person. As long as the means of communication is open you know. All these teachers do not have to trust me, but as long as they got access to me. That is the most important thing. Of course there are structures in our organisation but of course when a person refuses... like bypassing head of department coming straight through to you I mean you have got to allow for such instances. You cannot always say, go to the head of department because possibly this person might have gone through head of department many times and that's why he is coming to you.

All responses reflect that the school practices an open-door policy, which aligns with what Wesley said, that accessibility to his staff-members was the most important thing.

Yes we have that access to him. (Alphonso)

We have an open door policy. All teachers are free to enter the principal or any member's of the management office. We have open door policy where the management can approach anybody, anytime, we do communicate free...(Nadia)

If a staff-member has an individual or personal problem she can go to the office or say it anytime. (Lydia)

Despite the accessibility of the management cadres to the staff-members, there was a general feeling among the staff-members that they were not listened to and consequently there was a fear of expressing themselves:

One problem what I have observed is that some of the teachers just bottling in. You know the teachers' suggestions are not taken seriously by the management. The management are not responding. I hear also my other colleagues complaining that the management do not listen, "you suggest what should be done and they don't take it". For example you have a problem with the invigilation time-table, maybe you want to be placed somewhere else. (Lydia)

This is a democratic country but the problem is saying something... What I am trying to say is although everybody will sit with the same problem, the moment that you are mentioning the problem then you are attacked by the management. Then you have this feeling of "Why did I not keep quiet?"

I am saying that the management don't want listen to what we are saying but you have to listen to what they are saying. (Mary)

Democratic school management seemed to be the ideal of the respondents:

In the departmental meeting it was kind of more democratic in the approach because people were asked what they would like to do. What do we need to enhance or to achieve 100% pass rates in our classrooms. ...I will say...those departmental meetings are effective because of that... personally you choose what you want to contribute towards. (Peter)

Lydia suggested solutions to the problem of not listening or communication in general:

I think it is very important for the management to socialise with the rest of the staff.

That is why like at our school we have end of term and end of year social functions in another environment. So we think it is very important to socialise and to get to know each other better, and you know, this relieve tension. If there is no tension, it makes the communication easy. Ja. then you can talk freely ...

Last year before the schools re-opened we had a workshop on how to improve communication and was attended by everybody. It was a good course. Ja, maybe we need such kind of workshop, because I remember that it really helped... it helped because after the workshop if you go to the office they were ready to listen in the beginning, but as time passed by they...changed again.

Similar to Lydia, Nadia also emphasised an informal setting as an ideal vehicle for establishing friendly relationship and facilitate open communication:

[informal communication]...promotes a conducive atmosphere, because it creates room for free and friendly relationship. Sometimes people express themselves better in an informal discussion... informal atmosphere such at school parties you feel free to talk about issues. You talk freely about certain issues with the management.

...[in] a [formal] meeting the atmosphere is very "stiff", and people feel guilty, but when it...in the informal discussion where the atmosphere is relaxed, you can even tell the principal why you were coming late...stating your point freely, expecting...there will be more open understanding then in a formal atmosphere. ...in an relaxed atmosphere you will only speak the truth.

Mary also had her suggestions for improving communication:

A manager...even me as a manager in a classroom, should be able not only talk... I should keep quiet and listen to what the other person has to say. A professional and positive attitude is required from a manager so that other people can listen to him. The manager must be polite when he interacts with other people, for example using the word "Please" when asking another person to do a task and not saying: "I am telling you to do this!" Because it will give the other person a sense that you are ordering him.

Peter echoed Mary's views about the ideal communication process:

"Just hear me out" ... "Don't obstruct my thinking..." And that creates good communication also you know, you feel that at least they listened to me, you know, what I had to say. Even if it was stupid from the very first minute...you see. That is what I mean by that you should not obstruct the person when they have to talk

Wesley concurred with Peter regarding being considerate to other's opinions:

Number one...you have got to be open, not just open in terms of wanting to say anything. You have got to be open to outside ideas. Whether they are good or not good in your eyes, you have got to be able to listen to them. You have got to show high regard for these ideas coming from other people.

Further on Wesley maintained that apart from considering other's ideas, your behaviour should be tuned to be inviting and not scaring people away who would like to talk to you:

You always being busy with things that they see as insignificant would be a means that would scare them from talking to you. You always having little time to talk to them instead of rushing to the regional office,... instead of rushing to the inspector will inform them that you are not interested in them. ...you have got to create yourself an environment that is inviting to them...

4.12 Summary of the findings

In this chapter an attempt was made to present the data according to the various themes that emerged. The themes presented were eleven in total, but in the next chapter which entails the discussion of the data, the themes are collapsed from eleven to four. The discussion is guided by the main findings of the previous chapter. Briefly put, the discussion is chiefly guided by the themes that arose most prominently from the data.

Communication appears to play an important role in various educational processes, such as functioning of the school, relationship with others, sharing, building an enabling environment, involvement, team-work, ownership, leadership, empowerment, shared vision and change. I need to discuss how I collapsed the themes, as this will broaden the reader's understanding of the discussion of data which is the next step.

The collapsing of eleven themes into four was really part of the data analysis process. What I wanted to achieve here was to make the body of data more manageable, while at the same time showing the relationship between issues that are perhaps different aspects of the same phenomenon. Functioning of the school and relationships with others remain as separate topics for discussion, as organisational life is non-existent without these two aspects. However 'enabling environment' was incorporated into 'relationships with others', while the latter gained subheadings in the form of 'multiculturalism' and 'involvement'; 'sharing' was incorporated into 'involvement.' I argued that for a working relationship to exist a non-threatening, enabling environment is required, where people feel secure to express themselves and feel connected, based on professional as well as social affiliation. The same applies to multiculturalism: an enabling environment is needed which accommodates divergent cultures, underscored by consideration for others and understanding. All these nurture relationships with others.

Involvement also has 'relationship with others' as a basis. Involvement requires sharing among each other, which is linked to relationship with others. Similarly, teamwork can never exist without the inclusion of others. Teamwork is synonymous with group work, giving less priority to individuality. Although ownership is found in individuality as well as in teams, the difference lies in the practicability of it; in teams, ownership is for common purpose. Teamwork and ownership both have an emphasis on "we" and "ours". This explains why I have grouped them together.

Despite the different roles of leadership, change remains central to leadership. Bringing about change requires a visionary leader. But vision does not end with the leader. It needs to be shared with the subordinates – then it becomes a shared vision – as the latter are needed for the implementation of the goals related to the vision. Another aspect which is also fundamental to leadership is empowerment. Empowerment is about lifting people to

another level of functioning through coaching and mentoring, and that in itself is a development process that again calls for leadership skills. It is for all these reasons that change and shared vision and empowerment are sub-headings of leadership. Leadership serves as an umbrella for these three related but different variables.

The next chapter is a discussion of the four merged themes: functioning of the school; relationship with others; teamwork/ownership; and leadership, sub-divided into empowerment, shared vision and change.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF DATA

This chapter focuses on the themes that emerged from data collected in both of the research collection tools, questionnaire and interviews. These themes are:

- the functioning of the school;
- relationships with others, with the subheadings multiculturalism and involvement;
- teamwork/ownership and
- leadership, sub-headed by empowerment, shared vision and change.

The themes will be discussed with research goals in mind and set against the framework provided by literature (Chapter 2).

5.1 Functioning of the school

The role of communication at the instrumental level of organisational functioning arose strongly in the data. Within this area, the notion of training received much attention. From the responses it is obvious that the participants are aware that training of teachers is more divergent than it was in the past, depending on the institution, and that this can have an impact on how they carry out procedures, which is supposed to be specific or at least be standardised to the particular school. Van der Westhuizen (2002:90) acknowledges the impact of training: “Decisions by the professional person (teacher) are taken on the basis of technical expertise obtained through long and intensive training”. It is in this light that participants view the role of communication as essential to bring about consensus on what they ought to do, which should display uniformity especially to the external environment. This is in line with van der Westhuizen’s argument that for a school to function properly as a bureaucratic organisation, it “has to have policies, regulations and *standard procedures...*” [my italics] (*Ibid.*).

In relation to the divergent training of teachers, other responses reveal that “every institution has got its own way of doing things” as it is put by one respondent. It is then based on this that the respondent points out the importance of induction programmes to any teacher who joins the institution. Induction serves as a communication tool to

orientate teachers to get to know how the institution operates by knowing its goals, rules and activities. This has implications for the principal as the manager, as confirmed by the literature. van Deventer and Kruger (2003:209), referring to the purpose of staff orientation, contend that it is the task of the education manager to orientate newly appointed teachers as soon as possible to the new working environment so that they get to know the activities and aims of the school, which consequently will aid them not only to adapt and fit into the system but also to contribute to the running of the organisation.

Apart from procedures, respondents assume that every school has its own goals which direct the activities of the school; to them lack of goals equals lack of purpose, and the expectation is that they should be clearly communicated to the staff-members for implementation. This view is confirmed by various authors such as Bush (2003:50 who states that schools are “goal oriented”. Moloï (2002:7) also views goals in the same way as the respondent: “The goals provide the educators with a sense of strategic direction or *purpose*” [my italics].

The view by the respondents that the management staff should convey the goals to them is in line with what Bush postulates for what he calls ‘formal’ models of organisation: “These goals are invariably determined by the heads and senior staff and formal theories do not regard the support of others as problematic” (Bush 2003:209). Of course, schools are not simply ‘formal’ models, and the issue of providing clarity on the goals of the school to the staff-members can be problematic. Bush is of the opinion that schools are ambiguous organisations with “uncertain goals” or “no clearly defined goals” (Bush 2003:135). Relating goals fundamental to the functioning of the school, Bell (in Bush *Ibid.*) has this to say:

It may not be all clear what the goals of the schools are. Different members of the school may perceive different goals or attribute different priorities to the same goals, or even be unable to define goals which have any operational meaning. Thus while it is commonly expected that those who work in schools should have some overall purpose it is likely that the organisational context of many schools actually renders this either impossible or very difficult.

This view proves true to practice in schools where sub-units such as subject departments may have different goals from other departments or even the school as a whole, and this consequently leads to divergent prioritisation of goals.

Meetings were also perceived to play a role in the functioning of the school. Morning meetings (which they call “morning caucus”) as a means of communication are much appreciated by the respondents, as they find them effective in the sense that they are timeously informed about past and future events at school. According to Steyn and van Niekerk (2002:37), meetings in educational settings are held for various purposes such as wanting to get ideas from other people through discussion, providing others with information in the quickest way, and reaching consensus on a decision. However all respondents were quick to point out limited time as the downside of these meetings. They claimed that due to limited time the discussions were mostly dominated by the management, giving them information, and the staff did not really get the chance to discuss matters as a group or “to respond” as one respondent put it. The claim denotes top-down communication. This exemplifies the scientific management approach as described in Chapter 2, where the managers by virtue of the power vested in them assume that it is appropriate for them to be the sole givers of information and instructions (Bush 2003:58).

The principal acknowledged the limited time of these meetings, and even the fact it is characterised by top-down communication such as management giving information to the teachers. However, he added that unresolved issues were normally given priority to be discussed on the following day. Further on, responses revealed that the teachers had the need for longer and regular staff-meetings to discuss problems or just inform others, including the management. Staff-meetings held once a term after school were not sufficient, according to teachers’ responses, and some teachers left meetings early, leading to unresolved issues. Steyn and van Niekerk (2002:37) believe that meetings should serve the purpose of generating ideas from others, enhancing cooperation, and reaching consensus about decisions. All these require two-way communication. Wesley, on the one hand feels that staff-meetings are effective as everyone have a fair chance of speaking up. Apart from the complaint about meetings being dominated by top-down communication, the flow of communication especially regarding formal matters was

revealed to be top-down ranging from the Ministry to the principal who is the liaison officer. This symbolizes again how a scientific management approach is still relevant to the school as a formal organisation as described in Chapter 1 and 2. Referring to the communication at school in general, most respondents felt that the flow of communication was multi-directional, where subordinates had the chance to relate information to the management staff. This reflects moving away from top-down communication, which is consistent with the contemporary organisational thought commended by the human relations approach. However, at least one respondent feels that communication is more top-down than in the opposite direction.

The emphasis on clear instructions and expectations communicated to the relevant person(s) again reflects the scientific management approach where subordinates are there to be told exactly what to do, leading to well-performed tasks. In my view this shows that scientific management theory is still relevant to the functioning of school as a formal organisation. However, the fact that the principal is also concerned with the communication of expectations from various parties such as the parents and learners, besides making efforts to inform them about what they ought to know, indicates a blending of approaches other than the scientific management approach, where only the expectations by superiors of their subordinates are solicited. This is also in line with national expectations of more democratic education systems, where parents and communities should be part of discussions regarding school management and be assessors of the learning and teaching process (Namibia 1993:42).

Findings further revealed that sometimes the management imposes decisions on teachers about matters which they think they could sometimes provide positive solutions for if they were to be consulted. It is in light of this that they indicate a wish to be included in decision-making related to the functioning of the school. The teachers' wanting to be included in decision-making is also a manifestation of the contemporary critique of one-way communication. Hellriegel *et al.* (2001:56) argue that "contemporary employees often want to participate in decisions that affect their performance". Research studies have shown that employees' involvement in decisions concerning their work, in comparison to management's involvement, leads to more effective consideration of all relevant issues (Ang 2002: online). Furthermore, Hoy and Miskel (1996:290) share the

sentiments of the respondents, as they state that teachers have preferred principals who involve them in decision making. The principal has a different view, namely that decisions at school are guided by majority rule, but that sometimes he as a manager has to take decisions alone, without input from others if consensus cannot be reached. This is discussed later in this chapter under the heading of involvement. His views find support in Hoy and Miskel (1996: 290) who maintain that it is not always necessary that teachers should be included in decision making. They suggest that the involvement of teachers in decision making should be guided by the situation at hand, as involvement has its negative and positive consequences. In my view, one downside of involving others is that it is time consuming.

Politics is another aspect influencing educational operations even today. Responses show awareness that policy makers and the Ministry guide school operations through political objectives. It is in this light that teachers feel that the national policy guideline Vision 2030, which among other sectors also relates to the teaching profession, should be communicated to them for implementation. I consider it appropriate to give some background information about this national policy, as it will broaden the reader's understanding of its relation to the teachers and even to this study. It is:

a vision that will take Namibia from the present into the future; a vision that will guide us to make deliberate efforts to improve the quality of life of our people to the level of their counterparts in the developed world by the year 2030 (National Planning Commission: online).

One of the issues to be resolved for the realisation of the vision is to have a knowledgeable nation, and this puts more responsibilities on the teachers than before, as clearly stipulated by the expectations:

This new situation requires of the education system to shift the emphasis from imparting knowledge in the form of large quantities of information to imparting learning competencies that would enable the learners to cope with and take advantage of the rapidly changing world (National Planning Commission: online).

The emphasis of this vision is shared by the collectivist education approach (discussed later in this chapter) and the human relations approach commending education of good value and stressing acceptance among others based on skills acquired. This vision implies

that managers as liaison officers between the school and the ministry need to convey this vision to the teachers, as well as to oversee that instruction is guided by this vision.

5.2 Relationships with others

From the responses it is clear that the respondents attach much value to their relationships with others. It is in this light that they view communication as a facilitating tool for establishing and maintaining good working relationships. This view finds support in Fielding's view of the dual role of communication in an organization: "Messages in organisations have productive value and social value. They have to be used to get the job done but they also have social value. This social value helps people to work together" (Fielding 1997:27). Fielding acknowledges that communication serves as a binding factor in the working place, referring to the communication between staff-members. Most importantly, his view also fits contemporary organisational thought, regarding people as important assets of the organisations (*Ibid*). The Hawthorne studies as discussed in Chapter 2 confirm the importance of social relations leading to improved productivity.

Respondents consider communication among each other to be characterised by reciprocity. As the principal puts it:

For you to nurture a relationship between two people there has got to be a two-way communication...

This view is in line with the Schramm model described in Chapter 2, that communication should have a sender and a receiver whose roles are changing on a frequent basis to make the communication flow as they interpret what is communicated to them before giving feedback. Referring to a two-way communication puts emphasis on one important element of effective communication, which is feedback. Literature confirms that lack of feedback and assuming that all is understood as it was intended is indicates less effective communication (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:319). The importance of allowing feedback is that it can serve as an eliminator of misunderstanding, and also as a means to confirm and get clarity on what has been said so that common understanding is reached in the end. Hoy and Miskel (1996: 370) also confirm that a high level of shared understanding is ensured through feedback. Consequently, harmonious relationships are established.

It is also the allowing of feedback that reflects an enabling environment where teachers feel free not only to express themselves but also to allow others to disclose their likes and dislikes, which will then serve as guiding principle to avoid animosity and to maintain healthy working relationships.

The Johari Window invented by Luft and Ingham provides a framework for disclosing “behaviours, attitudes and feelings” (Rasberry and Lemoine 1986:52). The main purposes of disclosure are to correct perception-based problems and to nurture relationships (Rasberry and Lemoine 1986:58). Disclosing behaviours, feelings and attitudes, according to this framework, is divided in four quadrants, and can be summarised as follows:

Some behaviours, feelings and attitudes are known to us and to other people and can be talked about freely (Quadrant 1); others are known to others, but we are unaware of them (Quadrant 2); some are known to us, but intentionally kept secret from others (Quadrant 3); and some neither we nor others know or are aware of (Quadrant 4) (Rasberry and Lemoine 1986:53).

It is obvious that the responses refer to the first quadrant of disclosure, which is characterised by open communication (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:124). Respondents’ views are confirmed by Rasberry and Lemoine, who consider disclosure as crucial to relationships: “...we must learn how to share information with other people about how we think and feel in order to nurture our relationships” (Rasberry and Lemoine 1986:61). While the main purposes of disclosure are to correct perception-based problems and to nurture relationships (Rasberry and Lemoine 1986:58), Andrews and Baird warn that information disclosure should have trust and supportiveness as a basis for disclosing as it can be used against you (Andrews and Baird 1995:158). Yet in the same vein they assert that despite the risks involved in disclosure “it produces better, more involved, more satisfying relationships” (*Ibid*). However, among the responses is the feeling that revelation of personal problems by teachers to their learners is found to be harmful to their relationships. Andrews and Baird suggest that: “If the relationship is likely to be harmed in the long run ...then we probably should not disclose” (*Ibid*).

Satisfying relationships, I believe, go hand in hand with a friendly environment. It is in this light that the respondents say that communication develops the way they interact with each other, referring to their interpersonal skills. Communication among them can develop friendship and fosters trust and respect. Consequently these create an enabling and conducive working environment as they communicate better among themselves and maybe most importantly become a source of strength by complementing each other's weaknesses. One respondent suggests socialisation between the teachers and the management plays a very crucial role, arguing that it is a binding factor where the management get to know the teachers in a holistic manner. Knowing a person as whole facilitates the assigning of any tasks to the teachers. This in my view proves that socialisation has a dual role of enhancing relationships and as facilitating factor when it comes to task delegation.

Hunt, Tourish and Hargie (2000:120) who define the communication climate of an organisation as "how comfortable members feel with one another and with the organisation", confirm the respondents' views. They explain:

Friendly climates encourage members to communicate in an open, relaxed and convivial manner with work colleagues... Hence, communication is not just important from the functional point of view of getting the message across, it is also central to the development and maintenance of positive working relationships, harmony and trust (*Ibid*).

Departmental meetings were revealed as conducive to good working relations as it is characterised by horizontal communication and a democratic approach where teachers have free choice about what they want to contribute.

The notion about communication as central to development of working relationship corresponds with Fielding's view, mentioned above, that one aspect of communication is that it has social value in organisations.

The creation of a friendly climate depends on the communication behaviours of the members. All the teachers credited the practice of an "open-door policy". In the same vein, the principal put emphasis on his accessibility and that of other management staff to the rest of the staff-members. Although the principal acknowledges the prescribed communication structure typical of a bureaucratic formal organisation, to him it is

something that can be somewhat modified to fit the needs of his subordinates. As he puts it himself:

Of course there are structures in our organisation but of course when a person refuses... like bypassing head of department, coming straight through to you I mean you have got to allow for such instances. You cannot always say, go to the head of department because possibly this person might have gone through head of department many times and that's why he is coming to you.

This issue is discussed by Sinden, Hoy and Sweetland (2004), who refer specifically to a school's administrative structure as a "manipulable variable". To them understanding the structure is a guiding principle. "If we understand it, we can change it to better serve teachers and students" (*Ibid.*). Elaborating on enabling formalisation, Sinden, Hoy and Sweetland use the ideas of Langer to clarify that situations are dynamic; "events change so should the rules and procedures" and therefore flexibility is required to enable problem-solving (Langer, as cited in Sinden, Hoy and Sweetland 2004:).

However it is obvious from the responses that the teachers sometimes experience some communication difficulties, such as not being listened to, suggestions not being taken seriously and sometimes put down by the management if they dare to air their views. Consequently teachers do not express themselves. They feel that it is a barrier to communication and they assume that being in a democratic country is synonymous with being in an enabling environment and so gives them the right to express themselves as they wish and equally to be "heard out". Hellriegel *et al.* (2001:323) point out various organisational barriers to communication such as difference in status and authority: people with higher authority dominating the discussion and being more influential than the lower status group, resulting in communication problems. This proves true in practice, that people tend to listen more to influential or high ranking officials, and comments from the lower status group are rarely paid attention to. This is where ineffectiveness of communication comes in. People must bear in mind that the lower status group might have a valid comment which can provide an answer to the issue or problem at hand.

According to Andrews and Baird (1995:15) the contemporary view about the nature of organisations is in accordance with the human relations approach, in that it considers that

every worker not only has desires but also the potential to contribute to the management of the organisation. It is in this light that it is expected from management to tap their potential through various ways, such as increased involvement in the communication process (Andrews and Baird 1995:16). Rasberry and Lemoine have suggestions for improving organisational communication specifically regarding upward communication. "Upward communication is improved by encouraging feedback, both positive and negative, and by creating an open and receptive climate" (Rasberry and Lemoine 1986:425). The promotion of open, multidirectional communication has been presented as a feature of the human relations approach (Gibson and Hodgetts 1986:36). This in my view suggests creation of a non-threatening climate exemplifying democracy by management, which in turn encourages the employees to communicate freely.

The saying goes "Experience is the best teacher". As the respondents are the ones experiencing the communication problems, they should be the first to guide what should be happening at their school to improve the communication. Hence the importance of their comments on issues such as being listened to by management, and the need for regular workshops on interpersonal communication for all members, noting the good effect these had on management previously. Obviously speaking from management's point of view, Wesley agrees with the teachers, putting emphasis on being open to others by creating an inviting environment and not having excuses not to talk to them, and by listening to others' ideas whether good or bad. The literature confirmed that being considerate of others' ideas, is one guideline for effective listening (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:312). These authors state that listening is "an active process" closely linked to successful communication (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:327).

Clearly, relationships among all members are crucial to the overall functioning of the school. This is displayed by the concern shown by some respondents that conflict situations or personal problems between teachers revealed to learners create a situation where the learners develop negative attitudes, such as disrespectfulness towards the victim exposed to them. Rothman cites the views of the president of the Claremont Institute, John Maguire, to clarify the detrimental consequences of non-healthy relationships between teachers and students. "If the relationships are wrong between

teachers and students, for whatever reason, you can restructure until the cows come home, but transformation won't take place". (Rothman as cited in Sergiovanni 2001:80).

5.2.1 Multiculturalism

In order to understand what is meant by multiculturalism, one has to define the term "culture" first, and proceed from there. The term culture has been defined in various ways.

As culture has its origin in anthropology, to Haralambos, from a sociological point of view; "culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation" (Haralambos and Holborn 2000:884).

On the other hand, Talcott maintains that "culture includes such things as the language of the society...beliefs about right and wrong" (Talcott as cited in Haralambos 2000:888).

Fielding defines culture as "a system of beliefs, assumptions and values shared by a group of people. These people will also share a set of symbolic codes, for example a language" (Fielding 1997:54).

From all the definitions, what is evident is that culture refers to the unique way of believing in and doing things, acceptable to a certain societal group. What matters here is the common reference of culture to diverse group of people with distinct norms, values, customs and maybe most obvious, language.

Multiculturalism then refers to more than one culture together in one place such as school, where teachers and learners are from various ethnic groups or social backgrounds.

Multicultural schools in Namibia are not something new as many people might think. Although there were "whites-only schools", long before independence (1990) one will find schools accommodating learners and teachers from various cultures although in small proportion, as the apartheid government used culture as a dividing factor for the Namibian nation: schools were specifically named after certain cultural tribes such as Herero Primary School, and this instilled people further with the mentality of seeing themselves as separate from other cultures.

However, after independence the Namibian government took a stance to move away from dividing the nation through culture; instead it adopted an opposite policy by “cultivating culture as a unifying and nation building force” (Namibia 1993:46). One manifestation of this unifying is that all schools have to accommodate learners and teachers from all different walks of life. While acknowledging that cultures make people think differently, nonetheless unification through culture is at the heart of the Namibian government, as expressed by the following:

What we must agree on, however, is that our education system should draw on the practices of all our peoples for models, that our curriculum and materials should include images that reflect the diversity of our country, and that our teaching at every level should respect not only the customs but also the ideas and the ways of knowing of all of us (Namibia 1993:51).

This is to acknowledge the diversity (Namibia 1993:46) but equally embracing it with pride not just in the community but also specifically in the educational setting. The stance and view by the Namibian government specifically the Ministry of Education and Culture (then, now modified to the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sport) find support in the contemporary human relations approach relating to that. Its goal regarding multicultural education is to “promote a feeling of unity, tolerance, and acceptance among people” (Grant and Sleeter, in Banks and Banks 1989:67). The Namibian stance again is in line with how Banks views multiculturalism, specifically relating to educational settings:

A philosophical position and movement away that assumes that the gender, ethnic, racial and cultural diversity of a pluralistic society should be reflected in all the institutionalised structures of educational institutions including the staff, the norms, and values, the curriculum and the student body (Banks 1999:435).

Multicultural education puts emphasis on equal educational opportunities for all learners of various races, ethnic and social classes and both gender groups at all levels of education (Banks and Banks 1989:435). However, Banks and Banks remind us of a major assumption of multicultural education, that some students perform better in schools than others because of their different cultural characteristics such as racial, ethnic or even gender (*Ibid.*). I fully agree with this view taking into consideration that learners for

example who are English first-language speakers find it easier to grasp what is being taught, unlike those who need to learn English as a second language in order to understand what is being taught. This is also a concern expressed by the respondents in this study, that they find difficulty in teaching learners from certain areas of Namibia or other countries who are not well conversant in English. Banks (1999:19) agrees with this, saying that many students come to school speaking quite different English from what is being taught as the standard English in school. But different authors such as Code 1991; Collins 1991 and Harding 1991 (as cited in Banks 1999:23) state that teachers have to believe that all learners have the ability to learn despite their ethnic, racial or social class.

As this thesis focuses on communication in an educational setting, to this end the emphasis will be on intercultural communication. According to Fielding (1997:54), “intercultural communication in a company takes place when a person from one culture communicates, or tries to communicate, with a person from another culture”. This is exactly what is happening in Namibian schools characterised by multicultural groups, where teachers of various cultures teach learners from other cultures, or even interact with their colleagues from other cultures. Hofstede, who did studies on the cultural dimensions of education, provides insight on how education takes place in a culturally-diverse school. According to him educators differ in terms of two dimensions: individualistic and collectivistic perspectives. The individualistic teacher views the purpose of teaching as providing skills to the individual that will help him/her cope or get along with other individuals in the modern world (Hofstede 1998, cited in Monthienvichienchai, Bhibulbhanuwat, Kasemzuk and Speece, 2002 online). On the contrary, the collectivistic teacher concentrates on providing “skills and virtue necessary to be accepted among group members” (Monthienvichienchai *et al.* 2002 online). The collectivist perspective is consistent with the human relations approach, stressing harmony and acceptance among all people. The stress on good value of education is similarly a welcome aspect in all educational settings.

Multicultural communication in schools can take various forms. Encouraging learners to attend teacher-parent meetings with their parents, with one major reason to explain things to their parents if the former do not understand English; sometimes conducting teacher-parent meetings in a vernacular language such as Afrikaans; or the principal discouraging

teachers from using vernacular language when in the presence of members of other cultural groups – all these pronounce the creation of an enabling environment and acceptance of cultural diversity which facilitates communication in the end. All these promote the building of healthy relationships characterised by acceptance and unity which is urged by the human relations approach.

Wesley is so culture sensitive that he does not consider his position as a way not to respect teachers who are older than him. This is true of African culture, elders to be given due respect despite the circumstances.

5.2.2 Involvement

It is clear from the responses that involvement in decisions on issues concerning the management of the school is quite important for all the teachers. From the study it was spelled out that they can contribute to the management of the school only if it is communicated to them. The literature has confirmed that it is crucial to communicate to all staff about any decisions likely to affect them, as this will ensure effective implementation in the end (van Deventer and Kruger 2003: 99). This view is also proposed by contemporary management thinking, especially in the work of Follett, who stresses that involvement of employees is important when it comes to problem solving (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:59). Problem solving goes along with decision-making; a problem is never solved unless a decision has been taken on how to solve that particular problem. The desire of the teachers to contribute to the overall functioning of the school is in line with McGregor Theory Y, the underlying assumption of which is that “people want to take pride in their work and make a positive contribution” (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:287). This in turn has implications for the principal as a manager to involve teachers in decision-making (*Ibid*). Ang (2002) who is of the opinion that employee participation and employee involvement has the same meaning concurs about the importance of employee participation in decision making seeing it as a factor contributing to organisational effectiveness.

In relation to what the teachers say, Wesley as the principal states that when it comes to decision-making he is guided by the “majority feeling”, however he hastily adds that if

consensus cannot be reached, then he as the manager together with his management team have to take a decision. The assertion by Wesley, that a decision has to be taken in the end, largely depending on him, finds support in van Deventer and Kruger. They view decision making alongside leadership and communication as the most important functions of a manager, and that managers should seek to develop their skills (van Deventer and Kruger 2003:107). They also maintain that not taking a decision at all can be dangerous (van Deventer and Kruger 2003: 97).

One respondent puts high priority on being communicated to and involved in decision-making, as to her this implies being valued. Ang supports this observation relating this to the human relations approach which has the belief that valuing employees is illustrated by involving them in decision-making process (Ang 2002). And this for me is synonymous with being communicated to.

Another aspect which came out strongly is the awareness by some teachers that the “colonial time” has passed when decisions were taken at higher levels and passed on to the subordinates, sometimes compelling the later to be implementers; instead upward as well as downward communication should be applied. This has implications for communication on the part of school management to become more collaborative. The contemporary views of the human relations approach as well as the Schramm communication model support this view of communication as a reciprocal process, as described in Chapter 2. In this regard, respondents refer specifically to the designing of a curriculum; according to them this process should involve teachers in taking decisions as they are in better positions to recommend what is ideal. From the human relations approach guided by involvement perspective, this view is supported by Ang, who expresses himself in almost exactly the same way as the respondent: “...employees, when provided with the authority to make decisions about their work, can typically consider both social and technical factors *more effectively than can management...*” (Ang 2002) [my italics].

Sharing of information regarding the effective functioning of school came out strongly; responses specifically referred to the informal mode of communication as the most appropriate vehicle for sharing knowledge relating to subjects with teachers, assisting

with discipline of the school by identifying “problem kids” and deciding together how to deal with such situations. Wesley, the principal, adds that he himself makes use of informal communication as it is a quick way to disseminate information, when time constraints prevent regular meetings. This implies that informal communication is also regarded as functional to the organisation. This view is shared by the human relations approach especially in the prominent study of Hawthorne described in Chapter 2.

According to Andrews and Baird, informal communication or the “grapevine” as it is sometimes referred to, is “a part of organisational reality – a natural outgrowth of humans being together” (Andrews and Baird 1995:82). What Wesley is doing reflects the comments of Andrews and Baird: “It is vital that managers be in touch with informal networks, participate...and use them carefully to disseminate information” (Andrews and Baird 1995:83). Responses also show that agreeing and disagreeing signal healthy relationships, and that this can only be facilitated by informal communication.

Another interesting aspect which arose, and which is linked to sharing and communication is the practice expected of every staff member of regularly sharing food at the school, with the rationale of creating oneness. This again indicates socialisation among staff members. One respondent sees this sharing as a “culture” aiming to nurture relationships. In my view, this exemplifies a distinctive aspect which brings the concept of organisational culture to the fore. Organisational culture has been defined in different ways by various authors. For the purpose of this thesis I would only point out some definitions. Ouchi (in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 128) defines organisational culture as “symbols, ceremonies, and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of that organization to its employees”. Schwartz and Davis (cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996:129) view organisational culture as “a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organisation’s members that ‘produces’ norms that powerfully shape the behaviour of individuals and groups in an organization”. Hoy and Miskel, drawing from these definitions and many others, came to the conclusion of defining an organisation as follows: “Shared orientation that holds the unit together and give it a distinctive identity” (*Ibid*). The definitions might seem divergent at a quick glimpse, but one cannot fail to note the notion on beliefs, values, norms and symbols; all these are consistent with the way that culture was defined earlier in this chapter (see “multiculturalism”). Drawing

from all these definitions brings us to the realisation that the practice of sharing food as a group at this particular school has an *underlying value of creating cohesiveness*.

Wesley (the principal) sharing the same sentiment as, (discussed in Chapter 2) warns that one should know when to listen to informal conversation and when not. To him, a negative comment given through this mode might be valid, which might require a follow-up. Hoy and Miskel (1996:362) who described this mode earlier as a vehicle for rumour spreading (discussed earlier), are in line with the view of Wesley in acknowledging that this mode can serve as a positive vehicle as “the barometer of opinion and sentiment” (*Ibid*). Further on, also consistent with Wesley’s view, they recommend that leaders should lend their ears to this communication as it is greatly beneficial to them in the sense that it is “indicative of a school’s culture” (*Ibid*). Culture in this context, in my view, refers to the way things happen and are viewed by members of the organisation.

However, it seems that informal communication has its drawbacks; it can be used as a means for “badmouthing each other” and gossiping, as respondents put it. The literature irrefutably confirms that informal communication can serve as a negative vehicle for rumours (Hoy and Miskel 1996:361; Hellriegel *et al.*2001:327).

That the school is practicing broad participation as recommended by the Schools Act is manifested by the responses revealing the involvement of the Ministry of Education (as the mother body) Learners Representative Council (LRC), the School Board (as the major decision making body), the parents, the community at large and even other schools. All these stakeholders were mentioned to have communication with the school regarding school functioning. It is apparent that the respondents view school as part of the external environment. As one respondent puts it:

We are not an island...we are in the same Ministry ...we need to share information.

This sentiment of school being an open system interdependent on the external environment is shared by the open system perspective as discussed in Chapter 2, which refers to Barnard, a prominent social science theorist who relates the success of a school to good relationships with the outside environment (see page 18).

5.3 Teamwork and ownership

From the responses, three respondents urge the need for teamwork in school, as school activities are varied and need to be discussed as a team. One respondent views joint planning and joint responsibility as the foundations for teamwork, and creation of teamwork in turn prevents alienation, where teachers see their roles beyond classroom teaching and take part in other school activities as a team; consequently having a reward in the form of ownership, which calls for guarding.

From this view it is clear that the respondent sees a team as different from a group, as teachers in school are presumably regarded as a group of people working together independently. The fact that the respondent urges teachers to engage in joint planning and to take joint responsibility in order to create a working team shows that a team is more than individuals working together.

The term “team” is generally used interchangeably with the term “group”; in fact these are related terms, but they differ in meaning. In support of the respondent, Mears and Voehl provide a good explanation how they differ: “A group is a collection of individuals in an independent relationship with one another” (Mears and Voehl 1994:92). On the other hand a team is more than a group, “...in that members are encouraged to share in the ownership of the team’s function and direction” (*Ibid*). That teamwork is more than just being a member of a group as two respondents claim, but that it requires active individual contributions is a view shared by the two authors, who see contribution in functions as fundamental to teamwork. The two authors linked teamwork to ownership, which again supports the respondent, who perceives ownership as arising from teamwork, as it calls for guardianship from the team members.

According to Bell, teamwork in school has a variety of benefits, among others the following: increasing participation, improving communication, encouraging decision making, agreeing on aims, sharing expertise and skills and improving relationships (Bell as cited in Crawford, Kydd, and Riches 1997:121). Looking at all these benefits, especially the notions of increased participation, improved communication and relationships, it is no wonder that teamwork is becoming “an increasingly common concept” in the contemporary organisational thought (Andrews and Baird 1995:25),

characterised by the human relations approach. That teamwork has a human relations aspect is supported and clarified by Walker, who perceives teamwork in an educational setting “as the way to make our schools ‘collaborative’ and ‘responsive’” (Walker 1994 online).

5.4 Leadership

5.4.1 Autocratic versus democratic leadership

One respondent shows awareness of different leadership styles such as *laissez-faire*, autocratic and democratic leadership. What dominates his view on leadership is the difference between autocratic and democratic leadership. In this vein he urges that the democratic leader is the ideal, as he encourages two-way communication, while the autocratic is rigid, “suppressing his thinking” and in the process creating barriers to communication and leaving him non-innovative.

These three basic leadership styles have their origin in the study conducted by Lewin, Lippit and White around 1939-1940 (Bass 1990:546). The purpose of the study was to find out the implications of autocratic and democratic leadership in comparison to the *laissez-faire* style (*Ibid.*). But in contemporary studies, when it comes to comparing these leadership styles, only two are normally compared against each other, namely autocratic and democratic leadership. The reason for comparing these two might be that they are the most common styles of leadership found and most importantly because of their extreme differences. Autocratic leadership has been described as directive (Bass 1990:417), characterised by one-way communication, while democratic leadership is supportive and characterised by two-way communication, facilitated by allowing subordinates to air their views in processes such as decision-making (van Deventer and Kruger 2003:144). This supports the respondent’s view that he would like to have a democratic leader who provides an environment for mutual feedback, as the autocratic leader to him does not allow reciprocal communication, but views subordinates as receivers of orders and instructions, and decision-making as his “man alone” activity. This consequently deprives the employees from being creative and innovative as the respondent claims. Further on, van Deventer and Kruger describe the autocratic leader as being task-oriented (*Ibid.*).

This view is shared by Bass, who claims that the autocratic leader is more concerned with getting tasks done, is guided by regulations and policies, and less concerned with the needs of subordinates (Bass 1990: 417). On the contrary, democratic leadership is people-oriented, as it is concerned with employees' needs and is relationship oriented (*Ibid.*).

This shows again that democratic leadership is generally the preferred leadership style today rather than autocratic leadership. It has positive connotations with other leadership theories such as Theory Y (Andrews and Baird 1995:34), transformational leadership (Hoy and Miskel 1997:394) and the Likert System Four management style (Andrews and Baird 1995:36), which are all people oriented, characterised by collaboration and which emphasise the involvement of others. It also coincides with contemporary management thinking, namely the human relations management approach.

5.4.2 Empowerment/Developing others

Empowerment is one aspect that has connotations with effective leadership, especially living in today's environment, which requires skilled and efficient workers. However the term "empowerment" means different things to different people, let alone the different authors, who define it in divergent ways. Pastor concurs with this statement, postulating that managers have used the term without really understanding it or what it entails (Pastor 1996: online). Conger and Kanungo view empowerment in organisations simply as "the set of conditions necessary for intrinsic task motivation" (Conger and Kanungo as cited in Baruch 1998: online). Vechio defines empowerment almost in the same vein as Conger and Kanungo, but his definition is more explanatory: "Empowerment is a set of motivational techniques that are designed to improve employee performance through increased levels of employee participation and self-determination" (Vechio (1995 as cited in Baruch 1998:online).

On the other hand, to Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn, empowerment has to do with devolving of power: "...the process by which administrators share power and help others use it in constructive ways to make decisions affecting themselves and their work" (Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996:180). Baruch using Malone's ideas, concurs with Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn, viewing empowerment as

“the delegation of power which enables people at lower organisational layers to make decisions, though empowerment means more than merely delegation” (Malone in Baruch 1998:). Baruch extends Malone’s ideas to illustrate that empowerment means more than delegation, as it puts emphasis on certain elements such as trust, motivation and maybe most prominent in my view, the breaking of the distinguishing line between the management and the employees as “them” and “us” (Baruch 1998 online).

These definitions might seem different at a glance, but one cannot fail to notice the notions of trust, motivation, sharing of power, employees’ decision making through participation, and the possible end result of employees’ improved performance, which all represent transformational leadership. Peter’s perception that leadership is about empowerment and especially his notion of looking to the leader for guidance and wanting to imitate how s/he goes about doing things so that he can follow suit in the leader’s absence, show how transformational leadership influences behaviour by displaying “observable models of effective behaviour” (Bass and Avolio 1994:45). There is also an emphasis on mentoring, with followers taking “greater responsibility for their own development” and becoming leaders themselves (Hoy and Miskel 1996:393).

Wesley, obviously from the leadership point of view, refers to the delegation of managerial tasks as a way of developing and empowering teachers for management positions as it at the same time instils confidence in them, together with the experience they gain through execution of those tasks. Wesley’s view of delegation as a way of developing others has been linked to transformational leadership (Bass and Avolio 1994: 4). Wesley’s view of delegation from a management point of view is shared by van Deventer and Kruger (2003:119), relating specifically to the value of delegation in educational settings:

The delegating process may be viewed as a developmental process as it provides subordinate staff members with an increasing amount of work to be performed, and also gives in-service management training.

Wesley's view also finds support in ideas around transformational leadership, which identifies the individual's strengths and creates learning opportunities in order to develop others to higher levels of functioning (Hoy and Miskel 1996:395). Duns shares Wesley's view of empowerment as "enabling experiences provided within organisations that foster autonomy, choice, control and responsibility..." (Duns as cited in Short, Greer and Melvin 1994: online). Bush confirms that teachers have a great need for autonomy, (Bush 2003:14), and if empowerment can create real autonomy, that will be welcomed, depending of course on the teachers' readiness and determination to be empowered, for as Conger and Kanungo point out, empowerment needs intrinsic motivation.

5.4.3 Instructional leadership

Wesley, being a school leader, sees communication as an instrument through which instructional leadership can be conducted in a dialogical and collaborative way, where teachers are also provided with opportunities to assess themselves, providing critiques of their own teaching, where the principal takes the role of a listener. In my view, teachers when it comes to their teaching are just like learners and their learning: they all need and want to be given feedback on how they are performing. Although, practice shows that teachers who are aware of their poor performance fear being appraised. That is just being human. Wesley's instructional leadership behaviour finds support in the findings of Blase and Blase that effective instructional leadership is linked to teachers' self-reflection, being listened to, and giving feedback (Blase and Blase 2000:133). Instructional leadership's major aims include staff development, and as van Deventer and Kruger reason, "this is not possible without staff appraisal" (van Deventer and Kruger 2003:210). To them the one aim of such appraisal is to "facilitate the personal and professional development of the educator in order to improve the quality of teaching practice and education management" (van Deventer and Kruger 2003:214). Just like Blase and Blase, van Deventer and Kruger regard appraisal of staff to be a continuous developmental practice consisting of "reflective practice, collaboration, peer appraisal, self-appraisal, and interaction with the appraisal panel" (*Ibid.*).

5.4.4 Common goals and shared vision

The principal stresses the importance of having a common goal at school, as a directive tool to the success of the school, and that it needs the commitment of people to reach that goal – “positive looking” people. Two teachers who also note the importance of common goals go a step further and link it to a vision. They view a vision as central to the existence of the school. They view a vision as having a psychological starting point, something that the leader starts as “own thinking”, communicating to his “own mind and soul” before it can be shared with the rest of the group. To them goals are guided by a vision, which in turn is one way of directing activities at school and also of creating a better school. This view is consistent with Bennis and Nanus’ (cited in Beare, Caldwell and Millikan 1987:107) definition of a vision drawing from transformational leadership:

a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organisation...as vague as a dream or as precise as a goal or mission statement...a view of realistic, credible, attractive future for the organisation, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists.

The rationale behind the vision and the way it is communicated is what can create ownership of vision, cooperation, teamwork, and commitment towards effecting the vision. This is how it is viewed by the respondents. Communication of the vision is regarded as a two-way process relating to how the vision can be realized. Relating to the communication of a vision, one respondent puts it this way:

[it] should be clearly communicated by the management to the staff-members so that it creates desires for the staff-members to cooperate.

This assertion that the vision should be shared with the staff-members, and that it should be communicated in such a way as to catch the attention of the staff-members, demonstrates transformational leadership where the leader presents a picture of a desirable future to the followers so as to gain their commitment. This is consistent with the view of Crawford, Kydd and Riches on what a transformational leader in an educational setting would do when it comes to envisioning. A principal who is a transformational leader has a vision for the school and articulates that vision in such a compelling way as to gain the commitment of the teachers (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan,

in Crawford, Kydd and Riches 1997:34). Quite obviously, the teachers view a vision of a school as a collective aspect to which everybody should contribute to make it a shared vision. This calls for collaboration. This is supported by Senge, who maintains that: "It is not truly a 'shared vision' until it connects with the personal visions of people throughout the organization" (Senge 1990: 214). The notion of shared vision brings also the question of teamwork and involvement discussed earlier in this chapter. According to Bass and Avolio, shared vision in transformational leadership is exhibited by the inspirational motivation behavioural dimension where the leader is the starting-point of being committed to the goals and the shared vision, before s/he seeks the commitment of others (Bass and Avolio 1994:3). This tells us that if the leader is enthusiastic himself/herself about anything, this consequently has a cascading effect on the followers.

Beare, Caldwell and Millikan, who find that visions are pivotal to leadership in education, posit that having a vision demonstrates outstanding leadership (Beare, Caldwell and Millikan 1989:107). Moloji concurs with this view, as he points out the importance of having a shared vision specifically in a school setting: vision is the springboard for bringing about change, and it serves as a "binding force" among teachers (Moloji 2002:50). With awareness that teachers are all coming to school with different "values, beliefs and ideas", he asserts that all these can be merged through a shared vision (Moloji 2002:51). Further on, Moloji links shared goals and shared vision to creating teamwork at schools: "When you share a common goal, the whole school can be seen as a team that functions together in order to achieve the shared vision" (*Ibid.*). The notion of teamwork (described earlier in this chapter), shared vision as binding force and consolidating of divergent beliefs brings us to the realisation that transformational leadership indeed shares some sentiments with the contemporary human relations approach which puts emphasis on relationships.

5.4.5 Change

Living in this highly competitive and fast changing world, brings the realisation that change is an inevitable part of our life; schools are no exception. Respondents see schools as depending on the external environment, and thus learning and teaching is to be guided

by what happens in the external environment. It is in this light that they feel that school activities should undergo changes directed by the external environment, which teachers should be informed about as well as involved in.

To one of the respondents, the principal is the main “administrator” of information; he is the initiator of change or the main informant about suggested changes. This view is consistent with the open-systems perspective that schools are in an interdependent relationship with the external environment; receiving learners from the environment to be transformed and returned as educated and graduated, back to the external environment (Hoy and Miskel 1996:30). Based on this interdependence, learning and teaching should align with the environmental needs.

The reference to the principal as the main player in bringing about change again brings transformational leadership to the fore for various reasons: transformational leaders are known to be agents of change and to be visionary, and the literature has shown that change emanates from a shared vision (Hellriegel *et al.* 2001:373). Secondly, a transformational leader can facilitate change by intellectual stimulation, where the followers are challenged to question current ways of working and look for better or new ways of doing things (Bass and Avolio 1994:3). This can stimulate innovation, leading to the needed change.

The assertion that teachers should be involved and allowed to contribute to change finds support with Leithwood:

Teachers’ commitment to change includes their identification with and desire to be involved in efforts to implement changes in school and classroom structures and processes (Leithwood as cited in Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood and Jantzi 2003:232).

Fullan, who shares the same sentiment, describes change in school: “Educational change is a process of coming to grips with the *multiple* realities of people who are the main participants in implementing change” (Fullan as cited in Sergiovanni 2001:327). All these views explain and bring to the fore the importance of involving teachers in educational change.

As any change is bound to meet resistance, it is not surprising that one respondent claims that senior teachers are not open to change, especially if the ideas come from new teachers. French and Bell suggest encouraging direct involvement of an organisation's members in change as a strategy to overcome resistance (French and Bell 1999:122).

5.5 Conclusion

Overwhelming responses revealed the importance of the role of communication in the management of educational institutions, for various reasons. Though, two reasons emerged as an umbrella under which all other reasons were accommodated: functioning aspect and social aspect. Responses acknowledged the divergent training of teachers, which can have an impact on carrying out activities. In this light communication is seen as essential especially if one is orientated, to bring about uniformity. In congruence with The Namibian School Act, which calls for broad participation awesome responses revealed the desire of teachers to be involved in decision-making regarding school activities, such as curriculum designing and teaching problems as experienced by parents. It was also noted that teachers, parents, school board and learner representative council are involved in matters concerning learners. School is seen as a formal organisation with prescribed rules and expectations and even formal communication channels. It is in this light that teachers feel that any deviation should be communicated in advance to avoid disruptions of activities. Regarding involvement, the principal was urged as the main mediator, or central point for receiving and disseminating of information between the school and the ministry, community and even other schools. Involvement through communication was seen as a vehicle for creating good working relationships, and friendships, which in turn have a positive impact on the functioning of the school. Morning meetings although effective are found to be very short, leading to domination by the management, exemplifying top-down communication, and unresolved issues for postponement. Apart from meetings, the flow of communication in general has been described as multidirectional. Teachers have credited accessibility of the principal who practice an open door policy. However, some feel that there is need for being listened to by the management, as sometimes teachers do not feel comfortable to express themselves and want to be heard. Sharing, specifically using the informal mode of communication, is very much appreciated, as it really enhances the functioning of the school being it a time

saver and quicker way of relaying information. Even the principal makes use of this mode, and he views it as very much functional, taking into consideration the time constraint the school is confronted with to hold meetings. However, respondents were fast to point out the drawbacks of informal communication. They view it as a vehicle for gossiping and unkind remarks. An interesting aspect about sharing food arose as a rationale to create a culture of oneness.

As this is a multicultural school, challenges relating to communication was reflected in difficulties of teaching not well conversant learners, and using of vernacular languages in the presence of others, which is discouraged. Communication was also seen as fundamental to a leadership role for empowering/developing subordinates, appraisal, sharing of common goals and vision and to bring about change.

In the next chapter I present a more detailed summary of the findings, and conclude the study.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Discussion of the findings has been attended to in the previous chapter, but until some conclusion has been drawn, the research study remains incomplete. This chapter's main function is to summarise the main findings of the study. It also provides recommendations for educational practice and for future research, and finally, an outline of the limitations of the study; all these facilitate a conclusion.

6.1 Summary of the main findings

The study shows that the scientific management approach is still relevant and seems to be needed for the effective functioning of the school as a formal organisation. Responses reveal how the higher policy makers (government) regulate the functioning of the school by wanting national, political objectives to be implemented by schools, such as the Vision 2030. This again brings to the fore that one cannot separate politics from education.

Orientation of newly appointed teachers comes out as an essential communication strategy, as it informs them of the goals and the overall functioning of the school and where they fit into the school system. The need for clearly communicated goals came out strongly, with the management as the informing group and the teachers as the receivers of information. This creates a sense that teachers see their teaching responsibility as needing to be guided by goals. Bush agrees that defining of school goals is one challenge confronting educational management (Bush 2003:14). Teachers want to be told what is expected from them by being given clear instructions. In the same vein, the principal confirmed that the school has expectations, from teachers, learners and parents, even from the mother body of education, which is the Ministry, which should be communicated to and fulfilled by all these groups for the smooth functioning of the school. And at least one teacher feels the need to be informed in case of any deviation from planned activities, for example, shortening of lessons due to other reasons.

Discussions in meetings especially the daily morning meetings was found to be effective in the sense that teachers were informed about past and coming school activities. However, it was equally found to be ineffective, dominated by downward communication due to limited time. The principal even concurs that the time allowed for such meetings is too short. These findings confirmed the application of a scientific management approach at the school, along the lines of Bush's formal model.

All respondents emphasised the need for communication as having a social aspect of establishing and maintaining healthy working relationships, which they find a crucial element, having an impact on the overall functioning of the school. Respondents expressed the opinion that interaction among them eliminates animosity and creates friendship, which in turn enhances their working together as they become more cooperative. However, respondents expressed caution about open interaction, and with whom and what is being revealed, as they warned that personal conflict among staff-members revealed to the learners can have a detrimental effect on relationships between teachers and learners, creating attitudes such as disrespect and other unwanted outcomes.

Responses indicate that nurturing healthy working relationships requires a two-way communication as well as an enabling environment such as informal setting, which they experienced as promoting "free conversation" and acceptance. Democracy arose strongly as an important and ideal feature for a positive climate to facilitate open communication.

Where it is expected for a school as a bureaucratic organisation to practice clear channels of communication, an enabling environment is found at this school in the form of open-door policy, something acknowledged by all teachers. Despite this, at least two respondents feel that there is room for improving communication, giving suggestions such as workshops on interpersonal communication for all members as it was found to be helpful, reflected especially in management cadre. They identified the gap of sometimes a non-enabling environment where the teachers are not being listened to or suggestions not taken seriously by the management.

Working in a cultural-diverse environment was identified as a challenge when it comes to communication, regarding teachers, learners and even parents. Learners having a poor command of English, which is the prescribed medium of instruction, mean that teachers

experience difficulties when it comes to teaching or even general conversation. Parent-teacher meetings for the sake of understanding are conducted in Afrikaans, and learners serve as translators for their parents. Teachers experience that the use of vernacular language not understood by others creates a sense of alienation. The principal discourages this type of communication as it creates gossip cliques, which are found to affect working relationships by creating divisions. Cultural practices such as respecting older teachers despite being in a higher official position have also been noted.

Overwhelmingly, the responses emphasised the element of involvement. It is indicated that the time is past when decisions were taken at higher levels of authority and spoon-fed to the subordinates. In the light of being willing to contribute to the functioning of the school, teachers emphasise the need to be involved in decision-making and equally stress the need for upward as well as downward communication. Being communicated to and involved in decision-making has been perceived as demonstrating one's being valued in the organisation. The principal revealed that decision-making is mostly guided by majority feeling, unless where consensus cannot be reached, and he has to take a decision bringing to fore the responsibility of being a manager. To illustrate where teachers' involvement in decision-making is preferred, curriculum designing and parents' complaints about a particular teacher's teaching style were given as examples.

Involvement or participation is shown not to be institutionally limited. Responses highlighted the importance of communication with other stakeholders such as the Ministry, the school board as the highest decision-making body, LRC, other schools, parents and the community at large. Involvement of the Ministry and the community is seen to be spearheaded by the principal, as he is seen as the central point for information.

Further on, findings revealed that sharing goes along with involvement and relationships.

An informal mode of communication is perceived as functional to the school, where teachers share experiences and ideas on classroom teaching as well as identifying and seeking solutions for problem behaviour from learners. Talking from first hand experience, the principal see this mode as a quicker and timesaving means of communication in light of the time constraints the school is confronted with. However, informal communication has been identified as a vehicle for badmouthing others; used in

this way, it does not contribute to the functioning of the school. Yet, the principal suggest lending ears to negative remarks communicated through this channel, as it might comprise a valid point. An interesting feature of sharing is the notion of wanting to create oneness at the school, by sharing food as a group.

Communication and teamwork have been perceived as equally having an enhancing effect on each other. Teamwork is created through joint planning and joint responsibility, where teachers discuss various school activities as a team. Respondents perceive individual contribution towards the realisation of activities as signifying teamwork and ultimately a sense of ownership. It was also revealed that when people have a sense of ownership, they tend to be protective towards what they own.

Although I did not ask any questions about leadership as such, the respondents seemed to view the principal as one with a dual role of a manager and a leader. Responses therefore also focused on the role of communication in leadership. The findings show elements of various leadership styles and the impact they have on communication. Comparison between autocratic and democratic leadership was drawn, with special attention on communication. Autocratic leadership was described as causing barriers to communication, as it does not provide an avenue for feedback and is seen as rigid, rules driven and suppressing the subordinates' thinking. To the contrary, responses revealed that democratic leadership is ideal, simply because it allows two-way communication.

Further, the findings put emphasis on various aspects linked to transformational leadership, such as empowerment, common goals/ shared vision and change. It is obvious that the respondents view the principal as having a dual role of manager and leader. Management is synonymous with leadership, according to responses. Teachers also argue that they are willing to be empowered. Empowerment to them means being coached how to handle various situations which require leadership skills. They see this as necessary, and acknowledge that in the absence of the principal they would like to act like leaders, and that this means that the leader should communicate to them how to go about handling different situations. This is evidence of transformational leadership, where leaders exhibit skills which the subordinates would like to imitate (Hoy and Miskel 1996:394). The principal noted delegation of tasks to a subordinate as a strategy of preparing the

subordinate for a management position. To him, this is to empower and develop the subordinate. Transformational leaders are known to encourage followers to challenge their work and try something which is beyond their level of functioning (Hoy and Miskel 1996:393).

Another aspect of transformational leadership which emerged, is common goals and shared vision. Respondents, including the principal, put emphasis on the school having common goals which serve as directive tools. This shows that the respondents see their role in school as a team working together rather, than individuals teaching different subjects and with different aims. Close to common goals, is the school's vision. To the respondents, a vision is viewed as a broader picture with goals as directive tools. Respondents reason that without a vision one seems purposeless. It is in this light that they argue that a school like any other organisation should have a vision, and this should have a starting point in the leader, but should be shared with the rest of staff-members, so that the latter can add to it. Communication of the vision to the staff-members should be done in such an appealing way as to gain cooperation and commitment. This again, exemplifies transformational leadership where the vision is initiated by the leader and shared with the followers. Responses revealed that the school vision is to have all learners pass all their subjects. For all learners to pass, requires the commitment of all teachers.

Change was another aspect which arose. The principal was pointed out as the main administrator of any information regarding change, or the initiator of change. This again, typifies transformational leadership. Responses emphasise that we are living in a dynamic world, hence the need for change. To illustrate what is meant by change in a school context, responses emphasise that learning and teaching should align with the external environment, and that teachers should be communicated to about any change, in order to contribute. Resistance to change by senior teachers was raised, especially in cases where proposals for change are made by new teachers. Respondents argue that change needs to be accepted by all with open mindedness.

Communication was seen as a crucial element when it comes to appraisal of staff-members. This brings the element of instructional leadership to the fore. The principal

raised the issue of appraising teachers, and emphasises that it should be done in a collaborative and dialogical process, where the appraisee is provided with an opportunity for self-assessment or what Blase and Blase call self-reflection (Blase and Blase 2000:133) and not just a case of teachers being bombarded with criticism. This implies that teachers are being listened to (*Ibid.*).

6.2 Potential value of the research

I believe that this study brings into focus the crucial role of communication in the management and leadership of an educational institution. The study highlights the dual role of communication, as having a *functional* as well as a *social* aspect. I also believe that this study provides a bigger picture of what educational institutions entail, that they are more than just learning and teaching institutions. Perhaps more than other organisations, they encompass intensely *human* elements and *functions*, such as empowering/developing and socialisation, and are indeed visionary institutions which play a transformative role beyond their internal organisational life. Further, organisational communication problems identified were followed with suggestions for improving communication, which can be used as guidelines by other institutions experiencing similar issues. I believe that this study has managed to provide broad views from different angles: How teachers and principal(s) perceive their own and each others' role regarding communication.

The study has also highlighted the fact that schools operate through team-work. Respondents invariably referred to “we” and “us”, rather than “I”, “me” or “you”. In this sense the *functional* and *social* elements are both integrally part of the phenomenon of organisational communication, and cannot exist independently of each other.

6.3 Recommendations for practice

Drawing from the data, I would like to make the following recommendations to the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sport, principals and the teachers:

- Regular workshopping on interpersonal communication is needed for all teachers, including the management cadre.

- Principals have to encourage teachers' involvement in the decision-making process.
- Teachers should also be willing to be empowered/developed, by displaying intrinsic motivation.
- Communication in school needs to be audited on a regular basis, so that communication problems can be identified and be accommodated for in interpersonal communication workshops.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

- This study concentrated only on teachers and a principal at one school. As schools include various other stakeholders, future research can look at parent's views on communication with the school.
- A comparative study can be done on principals, looking at their roles as communicative leaders.
- A bigger study can also be conducted looking at communication between Heads of Departments and the principal.
- For a well-encompassed and rich study, research can be conducted on communication among the following stakeholders, exploring the views of the following: learners, teachers, parents and principals.

6.5 Limitations of the study

This is a small case study, conducted on five teachers and the principal in a single school. Since the research approach was interpretive the findings are in no way generalisable. Clearly a more comprehensive and richer picture of communication may have been obtained in a more longitudinal study, perhaps including observation. A broader view on the role of communication in the management of the school could also have been explored if parents and learners had been involved. These design decisions were, however, precluded by the size and scope of a half thesis.

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APPENDIX A - QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How would you define the term 'communication' in your own words?

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.....

2. How important do you think communication is for the management of an educational organisation? Give reasons.

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.....

3.1 What means of communication are used for the dissemination of information at your institution?

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3.2. Are they effective? Why, or why not?

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.....
.....

4. What is the role of communication in interpersonal working relationships?

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.....
.....

5. Do you think that informal communication contributes to the effective management of the school? Provide reasons, whether you answer 'yes' or 'no'.

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

Thanks for your time.

APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The questionnaire responses served as a guide for the interviews, and I used these responses for probing both for further information and for confirmation. However, several other or related issues were also targeted during the interviews. These were:

1. What contributes to effective communication?
2. Based on your personal experience, what are the barriers to effective communication?
3. Does multi-culturalism pose any particular challenges for communication?
4. How would you describe the flow of communication at your institution?
5. How would describe the role of the manager regarding communication?
6. What is the role of staff-members regarding communication?
7. Are there any particular communication problems at this institution?
8. Do you think communication needs to be improved? If 'yes', what suggestions do you have for improving communication?

APPENDIX C – LETTER FROM SUPERVISOR

30 June 2004

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Ms Undjee Kaura (student number G04K5228) is a registered full-time Masters student in this Faculty, in the field of Education Leadership and Management.

Ms Kaura has completed the coursework component of the degree, and now needs to conduct her research. She has decided to investigate perceptions of the role of communication in a secondary school in Namibia. Her research proposal has been approved by the Higher Degrees Committee, and thus has my full blessing. The research will involve administering questionnaires and conducting interviews.

The purpose of this letter is to ask for your support of this project. Research is – as you will know – a lonely and difficult task, and researchers need all the help they can get. Ms Kaura's research is likely to make a significant contribution to education in Namibia.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any further questions on this matter.

Sincerely



(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht
(Head of Department and Supervisor)

APPENDIX D: LETTER FROM MINISTRY



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF BASIC EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

Tel: (09 264 61) 2934328

Private Bag 13236

Fax: (09 264 61) 231367

Windhoek

Enquiries: s. Tsuseb

July 12, 2004

TO : Ms. U. Kaura
University of Rhodes
Education Department

Dear Madam

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT

Permission is hereby granted to conduct the research as requested at School provided the normal school programme is not disrupted.

It is hoped that the school will give you necessary support and cooperation.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Goagoses', written over a dotted line.

N. /GOAGOSES
REGIONAL EDUCATION OFFICER