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**STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS FACTORS IN AN
ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL SWAZI HIGH SCHOOL
IN MANZINI, SWAZILAND**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTERS IN EDUCATION
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by

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Abstract

In contrast with the large number of poorly performing schools in Swaziland over the past decade (1991-2000), a few schools have managed to attain consistently good results. One such school is St Michael's High. This study draws on the perceptions of different major stakeholders at St Michael's of factors deemed to have contributed to academic success at the school. The study thus follows Fertig (2000), who advocates research in effective schools to be done by looking at the perceptions of different stakeholders rather than in relation to an objective checklist.

In this study, St Michael's High is found to be an effective school. Its experience can play a vital role in helping other ineffective and failing schools to improve their academic standing and tarnished public image, provided the schools unreservedly commit themselves to changing their ways.

This investigation is aimed at understanding the roles which the school leadership and associated stakeholders have played in making St Michael's an exemplary school in Swaziland. Its findings indicate that the schools that themselves take the initiative to improve their effectiveness are the ones which are successful, which accords with the consensus in research literature on school effectiveness. The evidence gathered in this study suggests that St Michael's is characteristic of such effective schools.

Since this is a qualitative interpretive case study on perception of success factors in a girls' high school within the city of Manzini, interviews comprising semi-structured questions were highly useful in tapping the understanding of how various stakeholders contribute to the academic achievement of students in the school. The findings, organised in the form of themes, help illuminate what appears to be a systematic and well-focussed approach toward the academic development of the school and the fulfilment of its goals. Every aspect of the school system is thoroughly explored.

The validity of the stakeholders' claim that St Michael's High is a dream school for most Swazi children is verified by the school's examination results for the past decade. But what the research reveals are the cultural, academic, social, and moral values and beliefs which serve as a strong anchor for the school leadership and management, and without which St Michael's as an organisation would be unable to meet the challenge of implementing academic and national reconstruction.

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Declaration

This study is my own work and has hitherto appeared nowhere else, in published or any other form. Its use of the writings of others is duly acknowledged where appropriate. It is the first study of its kind to have been carried out at St Michael's Girls High School.

J T Mabuza

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

According to the existing literature on school effectiveness and improvement, the ultimate goal of education is to enable students to accomplish success in life as a whole through various categories of societal development. A society's competitiveness in all spheres of life is mirrored in its educational input and output, according to Lingard et al. (in Slee et al.1998). Without effective education it is doubtful that a society would ever experience and enjoy meaningful development (Macbeath 1999).

For this reason, the poor performance of Swazi high schools is not to be taken lightly. As an important determinant of the progress in life and of the destiny of individuals, it has been identified as an obvious indicator of a bleak social future rather than a bright one (Swaziland Government Policy 1999: 5).

The nature of a child's schooling determines to a large extent his/her success or failure in life (Spoor, cited in Slee et al. 1998:144). So improvement in school effectiveness is a universally necessary endeavour, regardless of the unique problems posed by specific situations and environments. The phenomenon of failure has to be overcome at any cost.

1.2 Research Context

The failure of students to achieve the required level of academic success has not always been considered a phenomenon of sufficient magnitude to cause national alarm. But in the past decade there have been signs of dissatisfaction among Swazi parents, who appear increasingly to feel that the existing system is a waste of educational and human developmental opportunities, which must be seized in order to meet societal needs and the basic requirements of human dignity.

Through the Ministry of Education, the government has made several attempts to address the crisis, but the results have been inadequate and have failed either to involve or to satisfy the public. The crisis in schools has continued to escalate year by year unabated, to the point that it has today become a matter of general public concern.

Despite the majority of Swazi high schools failing to achieve success in their Cambridge matric exams, St Michael's has for many years been an exception. It has continued to perform better than most Swazi high schools in its matric results for the past ten years (1990–2000), maintaining an enviable position among the top ten best-performing schools in Swaziland. My measure for the school's success is its matric pass rate of between eighty and a hundred percent during this period.

St Michael's High is a single-sex school for girls. It has boarding facilities, although day scholars form the majority of the student population. Its organizational structure comprises the school board, the parent-teacher association and the school. The school board is chaired by the bishop, who is also head of the Anglican Church in Swaziland. Its members consist of the primary and high school headmasters, PTA chairperson, cleric, grantee and the chaplain.

The PTA comprises teachers and parents: its chairperson, treasurer and other four board members are parents, while the secretary is a teacher. The remainder of the school's teachers and parents constitute the ordinary membership of the PTA. Finally, the school itself is composed of the head teacher, the deputy head, heads of departments, the department of career guidance and counseling, teachers, matron, prefects and students. Administrative approaches employed are both top-down and bottom-up.

Although the success of students may be judged in many ways as they grow towards maturity, school leaving results are generally accepted as an appropriate measure for judging success. According to Shipman (1983:65), "examination results are only indicators, means to an end, rather than ends in themselves". Such a view is well supported in the literature concerning school effectiveness and improvement in both

developing and developed countries by authorities such as Levin and Lockeed (1993), Darling-Hammond (1997), De Jong (1999), Beare et al. (1994), Bennet and Harris (1999), and Fertig (2000). Nevertheless, writers like Zunker (1994:2) confirm the usefulness of school results as a criterion to help tertiary institutions to sift students for academic and professional training.

How effectively a school goes about its daily activities is to be inferred from the results it produces (Fertig 2000). Edmonds (cited in Beare et al., 1994:10) argues, “a pupil’s performance depends more on the character of the school than on the nature of the pupil’s family...” In this study, my purpose is to investigate stakeholders’ perceptions of factors contributing to the academic success of St Michael’s High, in order to ascertain the key elements of the school’s “character” responsible for that success.

A puzzling aspect of St Michael’s High’s record is that the school is not immune from the instability of the national education environment, fermented by national teachers’ strikes for better working and living conditions. During the past ten years, the school has experienced about five national teachers’ strikes, in addition to a students’ strike over the poor quality of school food. In 1994 the teachers’ national strike took two months (January-February), in 1995 three weeks (8-28 September), in 1997 two-and-a-half months (September-November), in 1999 one-and-a-half weeks (1-11 October), and, most recently, in 2000, another two weeks. (This information is gleaned from *The Times of Swaziland* and other contemporary news records.)

In spite of the confusion caused by these events, the school’s educational activities were not disrupted and did not deteriorate, instead remaining intact and effective and producing a matric pass rate of between 80 and 100 percent (according to reliable documents from both the school and the Swaziland Examinations Council). Its impressive record of high performance has continued unchecked, whether compared with other girls’ schools or boys’ schools, or Swazi schools in general.

In the light of this, I wish to investigate stakeholder perceptions of factors deemed to have contributed to the academic success of the school. I would endorse Fullan's (1998:87) belief that "education happens when hope exceeds expectation". It is my wish that this study will inspire the large numbers of failing Swazi high schools to improve and work more effectively. It is hoped that the study will help to provide a stable basis for more successful management and leadership-among all the stakeholders in the Swazi education community, by providing a clear direction and programme of action.

1.3 Research Motivation

At present, I am not satisfied with the irregular performance of my and other schools in the Cambridge matric examination, though this performance is certainly better than that of certain schools which average a pass rate of below seventy percent. My desire is to demonstrate what constitutes an effective school, so that failing and ineffective schools can refer to this as a model in terms of which to improve themselves. I want my school to get to the top and maintain that position permanently, like most of the top ten schools in Swaziland, regardless of how uncertain the educational system may sometimes be. To stay at the top, a constant pass rate of above eighty percent is essential.

1.4 Research Goal

My intention is to investigate stakeholders' perception of factors in the school contributing to the academic success of the students. I am interested in stakeholders' perceptions, experiences and understandings of factors contributing to the academic success of St Michael's.

1.5 Research outline

This research project is set out in the following way:

Chapter two provides an overview of literature on school effectiveness and improvement, in both developing and developed countries, relevant to my research goal.

The main purpose of the literature is to provide a background for understanding the factors that St Michaels' school management takes into consideration in promoting the academic success of students at the school. Points emerging from the literature overview contribute to the identification of themes emerging from the data, as well as its analysis and discussion.

Chapter three is a research methodology chapter in which the orientation and procedures of the research are described and discussed. The research is situated within the qualitative and interpretive research paradigms, and the use of research methods associated with these paradigms is justified and explained. Emphasis is placed on the combination of structure and flexibility afforded by the semi-structured interview. The chapter concludes with reflection on the merits and demerits of the research.

Chapter four presents analysis of the data collected from the interviews conducted with a carefully-targeted group of stakeholders at St Michael's High School. The perceptions of the interviewees have been categorized into themes in accordance with the issues they raise. The chapter is written in a combination of interpretive and narrative style, with generous use made of quotations from the interviews.

Chapter five provides an extensive discussion of data abstracted from the themes tabulated in Chapter four, relating to the role of management and other stakeholders in establishing and maintaining academic success at St Michael's High School. This chapter discusses the role played by each and every participant in the process of ensuring the students' academic success. The discussion is informed by sources canvassed in Chapter two, as well as other literature not touched upon there.

Chapter six draws together the themes, trends and issues identified at different stages in the research journey. It summarizes the main features of the study, making reference to the context, literature review, data analysis and discussion of the findings. Since systems are not static but keep changing in accordance with needs and opportunities, areas for future research and development are anticipated and indicated.

1.6 Note on symbols and abbreviations used

This research is based upon a series of interviews. The interviews have been arranged and labeled in accordance with the stakeholder's status: the head teacher (A), former headmistress (B), PTA chairperson (C), PTA secretary (D), heads of departments English and Social Studies (E), class teachers (F), present prefects (G), and two former head prefects (Mrs Sihlongonyane and Mrs Masango, H1 and H2). All these interview schedules are included in the appendix.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

From School Effectiveness to School Improvement

2.1 Introduction

The history of 'school effectiveness' is a distinguished one, dating as it does from the late 1960s and the intense interest generated by the question 'Do schools make a difference?' Out of the investigations emanating from this question there has emerged a picture of 'the effective school', a detailed portrait for schools that desire to become more 'effective'. This work initially attempted to identify the factors that can be said to bring about 'effectiveness' at the whole school level. Other, more recent, research has sought to identify factors at the level of the classroom and of the individual teacher. In addition, considerable attention has been given to examining ways in which schools can use the information emerging from this research to improve themselves and become more effective.

2.2 Investigating School Effectiveness

The purpose of this chapter is, firstly, to present a brief synopsis of the key areas of school effectiveness research, and then to suggest areas where this research could have an impact upon schools.

In the late 1960s there seemed to be a general pessimism about the role of schools in society. At that time, the Coleman Report (Coleman et al. 1966) in the United States and the writings of researchers such as Jencks (1972) were suggesting strongly that the impact school had on pupils' life chances was a negative one. The process of schooling, these writers argued, had only modest repercussions upon children's futures, compared to factors such as family background. Some, such as Ivan Illich and the "de-schooling"

movement, went even further, arguing that schools were positively harmful to children and should, therefore, be disbanded.

It was in reaction to such pessimistic prognostications that educational researchers began to explore issues related to effectiveness. Initial investigations by writers such as Edmonds (1979) in the United States examined the performance of different schools within the same locality and parental catchment zone. How was it possible, they asked, for two schools with similar pupil characteristics and parental profiles to produce different levels of pupil achievement? The reason seemed to be located within the school, in the different ways in which schools operated. Attempts were therefore made to isolate those characteristics which appeared to make a significant impact upon pupil achievement.

Much of the research into school effectiveness in the United States was committed to the belief that the children of the urban poor could succeed in school, and that the research could identify ways in which schools could help these children succeed. As Sammons et al. (1997: 81) put it: "Early school effectiveness research incorporated explicit aims or goals concerned with equity and excellence". There was a tendency, therefore, for much of the research to concentrate upon inner-city schools, and this was mirrored in some of the pioneering work done by research teams in the United Kingdom led by Rutter (1979) and by Mortimore (1988).

In developing countries, the school effectiveness research movement which emerged in the late 1980s was mostly looking for "quick fix" solutions derived from studies published in developed countries in the 1970s and 1980s (Fertig 2000: 393). Fertig notes the emergence of a "policy and dependency cycle", in terms of which schools in developing countries tended to depend on received models of school effectiveness from developed countries for the improvement of their academic performance and achievement.

There in fact appear to have been good grounds for this. According to Fuller (1987: 255-56): “much of [the] empirical work suggests that the school institution exerts a greater influence on achievement within developing countries compared to industrialised nations, after accounting for the effect of pupils’ background”.

Fuller and Clarke (1994) later restated this view with undiminished emphasis, and Fertig (2000: 393) has registered its importance by noting that it “goes to the heart of the impact that schooling can have within a society”. It is a view not unanimously held: researchers like Riddell (1997: 83) object that “the basis for Fuller and Clarke’s acceptance of defunct models of school effectiveness research for poor countries is the too little questioned gospel that school effects are greater than family effects on such contexts”.

Part of the problem informing this debate is the question of what exactly a school is deemed to be “effective” in doing. As Harber (1992:161) sensibly points out, “the effectiveness of a school can only be judged in terms of the extent to which it has achieved the goals that have been set for it.” Clark (1994: 20) notes that disagreement has arisen through the postulation of universal determinants for school effectiveness, stemming from positivistic research aimed at “isolat[ing] those inputs and uniform teaching practices that yield higher achievement.”

More recent research has therefore emphasised the need to examine the issue of effectiveness in a wide range of schools (Fertig 2001). There is now general agreement as to the nature of the dominant model underpinning research into school effectiveness that has emerged over recent decades. First, there has been a clear focus on the concept of “added value”, with Mortimore (1991) defining an effective school as one in which pupils progress further than might be expected from a consideration of its intake. An effective school, seen through this lens, adds some extra value to the experience or achievement of its pupils in comparison with other schools serving a similar intake of students. In contrast, the reverse would be happening in a school that was deemed to be ineffective.

Secondly, this added value has to be measured in terms of outcomes:

An important characteristic of school effectiveness is that it uses an outcome measure as its criterion that is adjusted for its prior achievement and/or other relevant students' background characteristics. In this way, the added value of schooling can be separated from the overall development or innate growth of students. (Sheerens and Bosker 1997: 26-27)

This central emphasis upon the use of 'outcome measures' suggests the importance of observing finite behaviour indicative of cognitive achievement among students, and assumes that such achievement is susceptible to measurement. It is worth noting in passing that, writing as early as 1987, Cohn and Rosmiller warned that "effective schools have been defined in terms of gains in cognitive knowledge rather than by broader, more inclusive, measures of the outcomes of schooling" (381).

What, then, have been the key findings of school effectiveness research? There is now a fair degree of consensus regarding factors deemed to correlate with school effectiveness. It is important to stress, however, that these factors or characteristics should not be regarded as independent from each other. The exact relationship between them will be determined primarily by school context. It is argued later in this chapter that these factors can act both as an aid in the process of school evaluation, and as a useful checklist for those trying to promote improvement within schools – from developing as well as developed countries, with particular reference to Sub-Saharan Africa (Fertig 2000: 391).

Sammons, Thomas & Mortimore (1997:92) have usefully identified eleven factors indicative of effective schools:

- Professional leadership
- Shared vision and goals
- A learning environment
- Concentration on teaching and learning
- Purposeful teaching (effective planning)

- High expectations
- Positive reinforcement
- Monitoring progress
- Pupil rights and responsibilities
- Home-school partnership
- A learning organization.

The detailed examination of these factors which follows will provide an idea of what each of them means in relation to school practice, as well as a template against which to judge the degree to which a school can be 'effective'.

2.2.1 Professional leadership

The vast majority of studies on school effectiveness portray leadership at both primary and secondary level as a crucial factor. According to Bennett and Harris (1999: 535) a list of effectiveness factors from schools' research literature "relates to school-wide and classroom-focused concerns, with a strong focus on leadership, unity, order and high expectations." They go on to argue that these factors can be reduced to two dimensions of leadership: decision-making about the direction of the school's work, and approaches to the task of teaching.

While there appears to be agreement that "the importance of the head teacher's leadership is one of the clearest of the messages from school effectiveness research" (Gray 1990 cited in Sammons et al. 1997: 89), the nature of this leadership must of necessity vary according to circumstances. Much of the research reinforces the point made by Bossert et al., (1982: 38) who conclude: "no simple style of management seems appropriate for all schools...principals must use the style and structures most suited to their own local situations". According to Hersey and Blanchard (1982: 18), "Individuals who have had limited experience using a wide range of styles will probably need a lot of time, practice, perhaps training, before they develop enough flexibility in their behaviour to change styles comfortably as the situation demands it".

Nevertheless, three general characteristics of leadership do seem to emerge from the literature:

- Strength and purpose, with the head teacher or principal acting as the chief agent bringing about change-and improvement in the school;
- Involving other staff in decision making, in particular the sharing of leadership responsibilities with members of the senior management group and the inclusion of teachers more frequently in the decision making process in the school; and,
- Professional authority in the process of teaching and learning, a feeling that the head teacher or principal should have involvement in and knowledge about the teaching and learning process within the classroom.

Leadership and management of effective schools should try to attend to the needs of the entire school, manifest concern and determination for improvement, and always make sure that all the necessary resources within their systems are available and/or being utilised to maximise students' academic success. Keeping in touch with members of staff individually and collectively is of vital significance in building the school's working team, with the aim of creating a school culture of trust, honesty, mutual respect and teamwork in accomplishing the school goals (Tomlinson et al. 1999: 67).

2.2.2 Shared vision and goals

Within an effective school setting, explicit statements as to the values underpinning the school are likely to be evident, both in the material sent to prospective parents and also in internal documents which identify key school processes. The articulation of values is more likely to be effective when, as Tomlinson et al. (1999: 65) suggest, it is the "result of a consistent and collaborative way of working and decision-making. Consensus on the values of the school is associated with improved educational outcomes".

An allied factor emerging from the research is the need to put such aims and values into practice in a consistent and purposeful manner, in relation both to what goes on within the classroom and to what happens in other areas of school activity. Rutter (1979), for example, has found that pupils are more likely to keep to behaviour guidelines when they see that the standard of discipline is based on general school expectations rather than the mere whim of an individual teacher. It is important for teachers to act as positive role models in their relationships with pupils and colleagues, which includes demonstrating a strong attachment to the school vision.

2.2.3 A learning environment

According to the research literature, a school's ethos seems to be determined by more than the staff working together in the school with shared goals and vision. Another key factor is the learning environment and atmosphere in which students are working: successful schools are more likely to offer a calm rather than chaotic working environment, both for the staff and for the students. In their study of junior schools in Inner London, for example, Mortimore et al. (1988) indicated that an orderly environment was a prerequisite for effective learning to take place. Tomlinson et al. (1999: 66) also view an effective school as a place where order and calm prevail and conduce to a high group morale.

2.2.4 Concentration on teaching and learning

Since there seems to be general agreement that the primary purpose of schools is to provide for pupils learning, it should come as no surprise that many research studies have indicated a strong correlation between a focus on teaching and learning and school effectiveness (Early 2000, Catherine and Law 1999, Casavant and Cherkowski 2001, Huang 2001, Slins 1999, Levine and Ornstein 1993, Sergiovanni 2000, etc.). Some studies have looked specifically at quantifying teachers' and pupils' use of time in the classroom, while others have focused on examining the quality of teaching and learning

processes and their impact upon achievement. Adequate subject knowledge on the part of the teacher is seen by researchers such as Bennett (1992) as a necessary prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. Such knowledge, coupled with appropriate experience accumulated over time, appears to be crucial: Sammons et al. (1994) reported that ineffective schools were often those with a high turnover of teachers, a factor which had impacted on key subject areas and so affected the performance of the school as a whole (see also Fertig 2000, Reynolds et al. 1998 and Slee et al. 1999).

2.2.5 Purposeful teaching

As indicated above, research on what makes schools effective emphasises the quality of teaching. A core aspect of quality is what has been termed purposeful teaching (Macbeath 1999). This comprises teachers being efficiently organized, teaching taking place with a clear purpose, teachers presenting structured lessons, and teachers being aware of the different learning needs of pupils within the classroom. Joyce and Showers (1988), for example, conclude that more effective teachers:

- Teach the classroom as a whole;
- Present the material or skills in a clear and user-friendly manner;
- Keep teaching sessions focused on key tasks;
- Keep instruction within the lesson relaxed and simple;
- Have high expectations for the achievement of their pupils; and,
- Relate well to their pupils, with the consequent absence of serious behaviour problems.

•
Obviously, effective teaching such as this cannot take place without effective planning: as Tomlinson (1999: 67) says, “At the heart of quality teaching is quality planning”.

2.2.6 Effective planning

Effective planning is obviously linked to clear organizational structures and clarity of purpose, and is needed to ensure liveliness, balance, continuity and progression in teaching and learning. According to the literature on school effectiveness, the key to effective planning is the formulation of a development plan, which focuses on planning for long, medium and short terms, on assessment criteria to inform this planning, and on the utilisation of teachers' strengths to develop quality teaching using the criteria in the OFSTED Handbook (1995).

2.2.7 High expectations

This is one of the recurrent themes in school effectiveness research, and can be traced back to early attempts by researchers to identify the factors which lead to 'added value' within inner-city schools. In broad terms:

the weight of the evidence suggests that if teachers set high standards for their pupils, let them know that they are expected to meet them, and provide intellectually challenging lessons to correspond to their expectations, then the impact on achievement can be considerable.
(Sammons et al. 1997: 106)

Clearly, high expectations alone cannot raise levels of effectiveness within schools. Once again one can see the extent of the inter-relatedness among factors of effectiveness, with 'high expectations' operating most positively in an atmosphere where there is a strong emphasis on academic achievement, where there is an orderly environment conducive to learning, and where there is regular monitoring of pupil work. Research shows that this can be achieved through positive reinforcement.

2.2.8 Positive reinforcement

Research has shown that rewards, clear rules and positive incentives are more likely to have an impact on learning and result in better outcomes than are negative reinforcements such as punishment. Rudduck et al. (1996) have done much to open up this area, by examining pupil perceptions of the schooling they receive. But Everard and Morris (1996) point out there is a need for further research into what constitutes appropriate and positive discipline in schools from the pupils' point of view.

More general studies such as that of De Jong (1999: 69) suggest that discipline should:

be linked to the school's educational vision, emphasise the well being of the students and school at large, be understood by teachers and students alike, be generally unobtrusive, include praise and encouragement, and not exclusively punishment, feature personal interaction between the principal and students, and involve parents.

Arcaro (1995: 45) argues that students should make a contribution equal to that of staff in the development of their school disciplinary code:

Educators can relinquish the omnipotent, omniscient role that is so easy to assume. We can acknowledge our humanity, our fallibility. Students are more likely to respect a teacher who admits that he or she might be wrong but still does what she or he perceives as right. No one likes to be told what to do. If we have a say in what happens, we are more likely to accept what has to be. We prefer to have choices. Students should have a choice or say in what they do.

2.2.9 Monitoring progress

The frequent and systematic monitoring of pupil and class progress can be seen as a mechanism for charting the extent to which the goals of the school are being put into practice. It also provides a vital opportunity to focus the attention of key players, such as pupils and parents, upon these school goals, and serves as a way of giving a clear message to pupils that teachers are interested in their achievements and progress. Interest

in this area has centred primarily on the degree and quality of the monitoring found within effective schools. But writers such as Levin and Levotte (1990) are quick to point out the dangers of over-monitoring and of time-wasting that can sometimes occur when the school emphasises the gathering of information, and neglects to think about the ways in which this data can be used to improve aspects of the school's work.

2.2.10 Pupil rights and responsibilities

Research has shown that pupils' rights and responsibilities are a matter of general concern in effective schools. Substantial gains in effectiveness occur when:

The school succeeds in raising the self-esteem of pupils;
Pupils are given an active role in the day-to-day life of the school; and,
Pupils are given some responsibility for their own learning.
(Fertig 2001: 6)

Slee et al. (1998: 103) confirm that more effective schools can often be distinguished from less effective schools in terms of the opportunities they give to their staff and pupils to make decisions in matters that affect their own lives in the school. In short, effective schools practice collaborative decision-making as an expression of their concern with the individual rights of their staff and students.

2.2.11 Home-school partnership

Effective schools research indicates that supportive and co-operative relations between home and school have positive effects on pupils' learning. Studies suggest that the ways in which this positive relationship manifests itself will vary according to the age of the pupils. The work done by Mortimore et al. (1998) into effective junior schools found positive benefits where parents helped in the classroom and with school trips, and where they attended regular academic progress meetings concerning their children. As pupils get older, so the emphasis shifts to parental support and/or supervision of homework, and a regular monitoring of pupil's attendance and behaviour.

In a study conducted through interviews, home visits, and parents' workshops, Macbeath (1999: 57) found that schools which had done in-depth work with parents had learnt a great deal, not only about home and community life but about the hidden life of the school and the classrooms. According to Levine and Lockheed (1993: 11), parents are always productive and supportive of school programmes that have been started together with them rather than being imposed on them. So parental consultation is an important factor in the effectiveness of the school.

2.2.12 The school as a learning organisation

Effective schools should be regarded as learning organisations. Writers such as Senge (1992) and Southworth (1993) have focussed on the core idea that all participants within the school organisation should be regarded as learners. This involves all teachers and senior managers continuing to be learners through keeping up to date with changes in their curriculum area and with advances in understanding effective classroom and management practice. A key indicator here would be the degree to which the school supports professional development.

Clearly the amount of funded support for staff development will vary between schools and school systems. For instance, in certain developing countries like Kenya, large amounts of money have been invested in ensuring quality teaching in schools through in-service training programmes for teachers. However, argue Wanzare and Ward (2000: 1):

little consideration has been given to developing services which would increase teacher commitment, interests, motivation, and self-fulfilment, to enable teachers to feel secured and confident about themselves and promote learning through improved teacher performance.

The ensuring of quality, according to Fertig (2000), appears to be a significant factor in overall school effectiveness. This is especially true currently when, globally, major changes in technology are having serious implications for the work of teachers, with a

consequent impact upon the need for updating and teacher professional development. Wanzare and Ward (2000: 1) find the importance of the head teacher's role in need of greater recognition, with a concomitant need for administrative training for heads in order to enable them to promote the required and relevant development. In sum, the whole culture and ethos of an effective school must be that of a learning organisation in which learning is an ongoing process for everyone.

2.3 Issues emerging from school effectiveness research

The foregoing analysis of research on school effectiveness poses a number of interesting questions for those teaching in and managing schools. Two salient examples concern the possibility of transferring ideas from one type of educational context to another, and the nature of the criteria used by research studies to judge effectiveness (Fertig 2001).

Much lively debate has taken place as to whether the lessons learnt by educational practitioners in one part of the world can be transplanted elsewhere (Beare et al.:1994). In the United Kingdom, for example, the experience of the 'Asian tiger' economies is often cited as grounds for the importation into the UK of educational practices found in countries such as South Korea (Fertig 2001). Whether it is possible to transfer ideas from one country to another and achieve results in the receiving country similar to those attained in the original context poses serious questions as to the impact of specific local contexts on the ways in which educational policies operate (Fertig 2000).

Secondly, the vast majority of school effectiveness studies have investigated schools operating with a national educational framework (Mahony & Hextall 1997). In contrast, schools that operate within the private sector are often fee-paying, and usually draw their student and teacher populations from a broader range of backgrounds and experiences than do schools found in the public system (Fertig 2001). Such disparities will clearly need to be considered when those working within schools examine ways in which their school might benefit from the work of researchers looking at 'effective schools'.

The majority of school effectiveness studies have focused on students' cognitive outcomes in areas such as public testing and examinations (see Reynolds 1998, Slee et al. 1998, Slins et al. 1999, etc.). Few studies have paid attention to affective or social outcomes for students, an issue that bears heavily upon the broader aims espoused by many schools in, for example, their mission statements. As writers such as Reynolds et al. (1993) have observed, research into effective schools has not, as yet, provided us with much significant evidence about school and classroom processes that are important in determining the effectiveness of the school in promoting socially effective outcomes. This is clearly, according to Fertig (2001), a potentially fruitful area of enquiry for those involved with teaching and management in schools, both in developing and developed countries.

The remainder of this chapter will examine ways in which the knowledge gained from identifying the characteristics of "effective schools" can be translated into practical strategies for improving the education of young people.

2.4 From analysis to action: improving schools

Research into school effectiveness has produced a clear template of the features of the effective school, towards which schools seeking to improve can aspire. The process of becoming more effective, the "school improvement" journey, has been defined by Van Velzen et al. 1985 as "a systematic, sustained effort aimed at a change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively" (in Teddlie & Reynolds 2000: 210).

How, then, is the school to move from an understanding of the range of characteristics associated with 'effectiveness' to turning this knowledge into practical action that will be of benefit to the school's students? An obvious point of departure is to determine where the school stands in relation to some or all of the 'effectiveness' characteristics.

A mechanism for doing this, for exploring what has been labeled “ethos indicators”, has been devised in Scotland (SOED 1992), and has been used by over 500 schools since 1992. A handy understanding of what is meant by “ethos” in this context has been formulated by Rutter et al. (1979: 179): “individual actions or measures may [over time] combine to create a particular ethos, or set of values, attitudes and behaviours, which will become characteristic of the school as a whole”. MacBeath reminds us that the notion of ethos is not easily definable or quantifiable; that “ethos is, after all, a phenomenological matter and there is, therefore, no better way of getting at a school’s ethos than through subjective measures” (1995: 152).

The value of an approach through the concept of ethos is that it enables the school to move away from narrow definitions of “effectiveness” and “added value” linked solely to students’ cognitive achievements, and into an examination of the degree to which the school is fulfilling its wider aims. This broader kind of investigation is in line with the work of researchers such as Rutter et al. (1979) and Fink (1996), who maintain that an emphasis upon the ethos and the culture of the school will most reliably point the way toward self-improvement.

The idea of looking at aspects of school experience other than those which can easily be measured in terms of cognitive outcomes resonates well with commitment to a holistic curriculum approach found, for example, within the range of International Baccalaureate courses. It is within such a context that the “ethos indicator” approach developed by the research team in Scotland could play a significant part in the self-evaluation and improvement process in schools.

The rationale behind the Scottish Office Education Department (SOED) initiative has been expressed clearly:

School development planning rests on the assumption that teachers and school managers want, and need, information about how they are doing their job. Some evidence for this can be found by the analysis of results of assessment, by looking at pupil, and teacher, attendance.

While all of these are pointers to important aspects of school life, they do not tell the whole story about, for example, the quality of teaching and learning and relationships in the classroom.

It is thus important to consider performance indicators which tell us something about how these important aspects of school life are perceived from the perspective of those centrally involved in the education process, that is pupils and teachers, and also something about the attitudes, expectations and degrees of satisfaction of those whose attitudes play an important role in influencing what takes place in classrooms – that is, parents and other relevant interest groups (SOED 1992: 212).

This approach is in line with much recent research done within the field of organisational management into the importance of canvassing the perceptions of significant stakeholders. A “stakeholder” is concisely defined by Freeman as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of organisation’s objectives” (1984: 46). In this sense, then, the major stakeholders in the educational effectiveness of a school are the teachers, students and parents. This recognition informs the “ethos indicator” research conducted by the Scottish Office.

In practical terms, the ethos indicator material consists of three sets of questionnaires aimed at teachers, pupils and parents, respectively. The questionnaires were devised after an intensive period of piloting and testing with a range of Scottish schools in the state system. Each questionnaire examined attitudes to twelve school effectiveness indicators, with opportunities for respondents to answer on a four-point scale. The twelve indicators are:

- Pupil morale;
- Teacher morale;
- Teacher’s job satisfaction;
- The physical environment;
- The learning context;
- Teacher-pupil relationship;

- Quality and justice;
- Extra-curricular activities;
- School leadership;
- Discipline;
- Information to parents; and,
- Parent-teacher consultation.

The data collected from interviews in the present study make frequent reference to these indicators, and provide a rich source of qualitative information about the ways in which the school under investigation operates, as perceived by significant actors involved in the day-to-day life of the school. Analysis of this information can reveal both areas in which the school is seen to be operating effectively and, more importantly, areas where change and improvement seem desirable.

2.5 Summary

Research on school effectiveness has identified a range of factors influencing academic achievement outcomes. These include school characteristics – such as sector (private or public), type (e.g. single sex or co-educational) and size – and factors such as leadership, culture and student participation (Caldwell, 1993; Lee et al., 1993; Sammons et al., 1995).

Slins et al., 1999: 331); an emphasis on building a supportive climate, a shared sense of mission and clear goals, performance monitoring, quality teaching and staff development; parental involvement and district support (Wildy 1991: 168).

Fertig (2000:401) has nevertheless pointed out that factors influencing effectiveness are context-specific rather than universal. Though the factors cited above provided a useful guide, in this study effectiveness criteria are identified and formulated in the context of the research conducted. Thus, in place of the application of an ‘objective’ checklist of desiderata, the perspectives of a variety of significant stakeholders in the actual school

situation under investigation are obtained, considered and compared, so as to help the school map out a practical path towards self-improvement.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.1 Rationale for using an interpretive qualitative research approach

This chapter describes and explains the methodology employed to investigate the academic success of St Michael's High School.

The investigation took the form of an interpretive case study of the perceptions of school stakeholders regarding factors instrumental in the school's success. The qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate because it proceeds from the assumption that "access to reality is through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings" (Winegardner 2001:4). Seeking to share the perspective of the participants, I was interested in their (socially constructed) perceptions of what made their school an effective educational institution.

Furthermore, the "multi-method" nature of qualitative research was appropriate to this study, which gathered its data from a variety of sources, including examination reports from the exams council and the school and, crucially, interviews. For Berg (1998), interviews are the very cornerstone of qualitative and interpretive research, affording access to information in all its raw complexity and richness, and generating meaning that is realistically complicated, open-ended and context-based. A qualitative researcher accepts that multiple realities exist in any given situation, at the very least those of the researcher, the individuals being investigated, and the reader or audience interpreting a study (Creswell 1994:5).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989: 91), "much qualitative research is based on a holistic view that social phenomena, human dilemmas, and the nature of cases are situational and influenced by happenings of many kinds." Assuming this holistic

perspective, qualitative researchers enter the research setting with open minds, prepared to immerse themselves in the complexity of the situation, and accepting that interaction between themselves and their participants will be an inevitable part of the research process. Variables will emerge from the data, leading to “context-bound” information and patterns, and theories to characterise and explain the particular phenomenon under investigation. Problems or contradictions that arise in the process of reconciling data derived from different sources can usually be resolved in the course of writing up qualitative research, through the process of interpretive commentary.

My case study of stakeholder perceptions of success factors at St Michael’s High School was particularly suited to the qualitative and interpretive research methodology because the enquiry focused on how the leadership and management of the school construed themselves and their settings, and how the inhabitants of those settings made sense of their own surroundings. According to Creswell (1984: 6), a “qualitative researcher needs to report faithfully these realities and to rely on the voices and interpretation of informants”. He advises enquirers to interact closely with those they investigate: the interaction may involve actual collaboration or observing informants over a prolonged period of time. In other words, investigators should seek to minimise the distance between themselves and those they are researching. A consequence of this personal investment is that, as Leedy (1997:107) puts it, “qualitative researchers are often described as being the research instrument because the bulk of their data collection is dependent on their personal involvement (interviews, observations) in the settings”.

What I found particularly appealing about the qualitative research approach is its combination of oral and non-oral methods of data gathering, which seemed to represent the social and scientific spheres of endeavour in a complementary relationship. I was also drawn to the way in which qualitative research can communicate its findings, at least in part, by using the stories and words of individual participants, by allowing their voices to be heard. This is of course consonant with the interpretative research approach, which seeks to reveal how individuals interpret and understand their situations.

3.2 Rationale for using a case study

According to Ragin (1992:218 cited in Neuman 1997), “In qualitative research, ideas and evidence are mutually interdependent. This applies to case study analysis.” In other words, case studies are not empirical demonstrations of pre-existing theoretical postulates: rather, in the analysis of a situation, the enquirer gathers data and implements ideas simultaneously to specify a case.

I chose to conduct a case study because I wished to investigate a specific phenomenon with the potential to reveal a great deal about school effectiveness. The case study was also appropriate because it reduced the research challenge to a manageable size and time frame.

Lovell and Lawson (1971: 40-41) point to the essential strength and weakness of the case study when they say that

The case study of a single unit . . . may be thought of limited value in establishing generalisations, but there are often distinct advantages in this type of research, especially if the units are representatives of a larger population and if the case study is supplemented by other types of research.

On the other hand, it has been argued that case studies are “down to earth and attention-holding, in harmony with the reader’s own experience, and thus provide a natural basis for generalisation” (Cohen and Manion 1998: 128). (Cohen and Manion go on to make a strong case for the subtlety and complexity that the case study method is capable of evincing.) The sensible conclusion to draw is that the researcher should tread cautiously in generalising the findings of the case study, while at the same time making the most of the opportunity for really detailed and nuanced observation and understanding.

As a single researcher responsible for gathering the most appropriate information pertaining to the academic success of St Michael’s, I was consciously selective about the

type of data sought and the tools I would use for gathering it, approaching the task “systematically and critically”:

Case studies are carried out systematically and critically if they are aimed at the improvement of education; if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research. (Bassey 1981: 86)

One of the most attractive aspects of the case study approach is that its contribution to knowledge and “the improvement of education” can be immediate. I considered this project “a step to action,” because it emerges from a world of action and seeks to make a contribution to that world by sharing its findings. One hopes that this will result in staff and individual self-development, institutional feedback, formative evaluation, and in turn influence educational policy making (see Cohen and Manion 1998: 128).

A last feature of the case study worth mentioning is its openness to interpretation and reinterpretation (Cohen and Manion 1998). Because of its open-minded empiricism, it minimises reliance on implicit assumptions and makes “the research process itself accessible. Case studies therefore might contribute towards the democratisation of decision making (and knowledge itself). At their best they allow the readers to judge the implication of a study for themselves” (Adelman et al. 1980, cited in Cohen and Manion 1998: 123).

3.3 Data gathering

Apart from certain documents made available to me – including school exam results for the past ten years from the Swaziland Examination Council, and various papers (including a brief history of the school) from St Michael’s High – my main tool for gathering data was the interview. I conducted semi-structured interviews because the format allows for further unscripted probing when appropriate.

The 13 participants in the study of factors leading to the academic success of St Michael's High were asked questions apposite to their role and experience. The sort of information sought from the head teacher, for instance, related to his managerial experience and style, values, vision, staffing, decision-making, staff development, funding, parents' role in the school leadership, leadership preparation for prefects and school climate.

From the former headmistress I hoped to obtain similar information, so that I would be able to compare styles of leadership and see how much change – if any – had taken place for the betterment of the school. Questions asked of the PTA executives centred on their role in the school, their perceptions of success, the importance and scheduling of meetings, parents' participation generally and their own involvement in particular. On the other hand, heads of departments were expected to assist with knowledge based on their teaching experience, with selection criteria for their professional positions, and with information about the role of heads of departments, departmental procedures, the value of parental support or involvement, and their ideas about success and how to measure it.

The matric class teachers proved a useful source of information on school selection, professional procedure, classroom leadership and management, academic co-ordination and commitment, value in staff meetings and managerial strategies of success. What was expected from the prefects was their understanding of academic success factors, motivation, educational commitment, the role of head prefects in the school and the extent of their powers, the importance of school administrative unity, the provision of learning facilities, the role of extra-curricular activities, the role of parents, and the school climate or ethos as a whole. The enquiry was also extended to former head prefects, and sought their views and experience in a rather more open-ended way.

3.4 Semi-structured interviews

Before the research proper began, appropriate questions were formulated for the interviews. These set questions provided the "structure": the "semi-" component made

allowance for the 'probing' characteristic of in-depth interviews. According to Seidman (1991: 2), "the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience". This is exactly what I was after in my research.

Seidman also notes that "if given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on" (ibid.). The teachers whom I had selected for interviews all had at least ten years' experience at the school, and all might – given suitably relaxed and conducive conditions – be expected to be able to share "a lot about what is going on".

Semi-structured interviews enabled this to happen. Drawing on one of the strengths of in-depth interviewing, that it "encourages people to construct their experience actively within the context of their lives" (Seidman 1991: 8), the questions I asked helped to build upon and explore the participants' responses, whilst remaining firmly focused on the research objectives and keeping to the point.

The questions asked were systematic and followed a consistent sequence. They were "formulated in words familiar to the people being interviewed" (Berg 1998: 61-62), and in their flexibility reflected "an awareness that individuals understand the world in varying ways" (ibid.). In the interviews I tried to display an attitude of openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than seeming to invoke ready-made categories and schemes for interpretation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000: 273). All the interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed for analysis and discussion.

My interviewees consisted of the present principal, a former principal, two heads of department (English and social sciences), two form five class teachers, two present head prefects and two former ones holding prominent positions in the society, as well as three parents representing the PTA – the chairman, secretary and treasurer.

The interviews enabled me to establish over time a substantial relationship with these participants and steadily gain understanding through sharing their experience of academic

success. My research experience confirmed Todorove's view that interviewing is "a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of individuals whose lives constitute education" (1984: 7).

3.5 Time scale

The fieldwork for this research took 24 working days; in addition four days were spent travelling and two making preparations. Six of the interviewees had to be visited in their respective homes or current work places, while the remaining seven were available – depending on their teaching commitments – at St Michael's High School.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process that follows data gathering. Yin describes it as a process of "examining, categorising, tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the propositions of study" (1994: 102). Wolcott (1990) advises beginning with basic data sorting, creating categories adequately basic or broad or comprehensive to contain all the data. He proposes that the researcher ask some very basic questions like, "What is going on here?"

This is what I proceeded to do after accumulating data from the interviews and documentary sources. The aim was to "uncover themes that recur across categories" (Wolcott 1990: 32-33) by cross-matching similar elements from various individual sources. This proved to be a highly time-consuming and arduous process.

I nevertheless pursued the research goal of identifying the themes that synthesise the interviewees' perception of success factors. Since these occurred in so many different guises and formulations, I have to concur with Agar's (1980:164) argument that there is

no substitute for the interpretive insight of a qualitative eye in the identification of themes from the interview data. Finally, my reading on social research methods (especially Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000) helped me further to analyse the themes identified.

3.7 Ethical considerations

I believe that this research project complies with all applicable ethical requirements. My research within the school was conducted with the full approval of the head teacher as well as the interviewees. Their permission had been sought prior to the commencement of the research process.

I did not do the research in my own school because the chances of ethical compromise were high: there would, for instance, have been an inevitable tendency to turn a blind eye to certain sensitive internal issues. I also made every effort to confirm that research of this sort had never been done by anyone before at St Michael's High School in Swaziland. Finally, the stakeholders who participated are not named, so as to safeguard their privacy and maintain confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to an analysis and interpretation of the data collected through interviews recorded at and in the vicinity of St Michael's High School for Girls during the month of July 2001. The main purpose is to gain an understanding of what school stakeholders perceive to be the factors responsible for students' academic success in the Cambridge Matric exams. I also wish to discover whether the notion of "success" has a wider application in the lives of the students who pass through St Michael's.

Academic success may seem a simple matter to people observing from afar; presumably it is more complex than it seems, or else more schools would achieve results comparable to those of St Michael's. A first point to note is that success cannot be achieved within a short period of time. According to the views of the stakeholders interviewed, it depends upon the development of multi-dimensional strategies, encouraged by the leadership and management of the school.

Indeed, the managerial components of the school – the principal, heads of departments, class teachers, head prefects, parents via the PTA, and the school board – play a vital role in guiding the school towards achieving its goals as an organisation. The key to this achievement is co-ordinated and sustained effort.

The data will be discussed in terms of the themes that emerged in the process of analysis.

4.2 Parental involvement

According to the chairperson of the PTA, the school's achievement of academic success is due to sound managerial co-operation between the teachers and the parents. In short,

the leadership of the school has realised the importance of co-operation with parents in promoting the performance of students. The chairperson maintains that (C):

the PTA works hand in hand with the school board in running the school, but mainly the PTA, being a parent association, works closely with the head teacher and the teachers of the school . . . the chairperson has an interest in monitoring the general progress of the school and also discussing projects with the head teacher, and making sure that these projects are implemented on time. Recently we have started a computer programme and we have a computer classroom at the school. The PTA has to get involved in all these activities, including talking to people outside the school about the fundraising for these projects, including especially this computer classroom programme that we have.

A similar perception concerning the role played by parents in the school was expressed by the secretary of the PTA, who added (D):

The role of the chairperson is to lead and guide the parents in all school matters . . . they are working alongside, not exactly within, the school system, but towards development contributing to academic success of the school.

In sum, meetings of the PTA help to iron out little differences or problems that may be impediments to students' academic success. The secretary's perception of success is that it cannot be attained through the efforts of an individual, but requires the cooperation of all concerned.

The former headmistress also expressed her appreciation of the parents' contribution through the PTA:

I found parents just wonderful, I don't know, but I supposed we made them feel that we wanted the best for their children . . . (Nokuthula, Nokukhanya, Mahlalela, etc) . . . There was a trust between the two groups and it went a long way....

The former principal of the school found the cordial atmosphere that existed between her and the parents an essential ingredient in the achievement of academic success. The climate of trust and openness was a panacea for progress. This feeling was echoed by the

present head teacher: according to him, the PTA at St Michael's works as a unified group in contributing to the academic success of the school (A):

I won't split them because they work as a group. The PTA includes teachers, that is why it is called the Parents Teachers Association. So it is where the teachers bring up their views to the parents without me alone doing it. It is where parents will say what they don't like or the way their children are taught by the teachers. Of course there are exchanges of words in one way or another it has to happen like that as part of the organizational activities. In short it is where the exchanging of views, suggestions, etc., takes place.

According to the head teacher's perception, the PTA is a forum for soul-searching, brainstorming, the exchange of views and the renewal of commitment to ensuring the students' academic success. The heads of departments also perceive parents' contribution through the PTA as vital to students' academic success (E):

They organize meetings, parents' meeting, whatever takes place in the school is agreed and approved by the PTA as a board. So there is nothing like parents' meeting in the absence of the teachers, so the parents and the teachers meet, and then if there are issues they raise. Teachers are answerable to the PTA so it is not just being the head teacher grilled by parents on any issue. The teachers must respond too. After the open day then we sit down as teachers and review the outcomes and compare as what contribution did the parents bring and what some of the things that can be implemented. These take place in the departmental meetings. Like it was agreed in meeting that we should solicit funds and buy computers by fundraising. And we have been able to buy some computers.

That teachers consider themselves answerable to parents through the PTA is here identified as a key factor in maintaining and improving educational performance levels. Openness and mutual trust are factors stressed once again. The status and influential role of the PTA in development and planning was once more underlined by the Form Five class teachers, who noted that (F):

Whenever a project is to be carried out the PTA is to be informed. When a classroom has to be built and even toilets you have to approach the PTA for an approval, then tell the parents in an annual general

meeting (GM) because all these involve money. Then from there you can carry on.

Consultation between parents and teachers is thus seen as crucial to the proper management of the school. As far as the students are concerned, the present head prefects of the school confirmed the ongoing involvement of parents in their schooling (G):

Yes, they were first allowed to visit us every first Sunday of the month, to check our progress, but now they come every week-end – although the prospectus says they come every first Sunday of the month. That is not real supervision but just a way of checking.

A former head prefect of the school, now at the William Pitcher Teachers' College, implied that the cost of attending St Michael's was in itself an incentive for both students and parents, to ensure that they got their money's worth (H2):

because it was one of the most expensive schools, and it still is even today, so the parents paid the fees at the right time so that you could not be sent home, because that disturbed the students. That I think on the part of the parents that was the main contributory factor, because paying fees on time was making that the students were in class throughout the year.

The prompt payment of fees indicates parents' commitment to their children's education. Receiving fees on time enables the school to buy teaching and learning materials at the appropriate time.

4.3 Expectations

Although their needs and expectations differ, all the stakeholders at St Michael's High School share similar goals and objectives. In order to make these realisable, the leadership and management of the school have adopted a system of collaborative leadership, which amounts to a process of empowerment through the sharing of decision-making. The head teacher's role as leader and manager of the school is therefore not to dictate but to liaise with all the stakeholders and unite them as one body dedicated to achieving academic success.

Within this structure, the role of parents cannot be underestimated. According to the PTA chairperson's (C):

one of the goals of the PTA is that this should be an exemplary and leading school in Swaziland. We would like to make sure that the school performs very well academically every year, and we do this by...making sure that all parents pay the fees. All parents are involved in fundraising. And we normally have open days where each parent comes to assess the academic performance of his/her children, and we make sure that all parents show this kind of keen interest in the academic work of their children. So these are some of the goals of the PTA to make sure that we maintain the high academic standards for the school. As parents we give maximum support to the administration of the school.

The PTA secretary, who is also a teacher in the school, elaborates on this role (D):

So parents should see to it that they want to maintain the standard of the school. If they see anything that would lead to the dropping of standards, they are going to point it out at the meetings, because they don't want the school to collapse at their own expense....

The support that parents give to St Michael's High is a measure of the magnitude of their expectations. A consequence of these expectations is that students are not only aware that their parents know what goes on within the school, but are also spurred on to work harder in order to achieve good results. In this way, the high expectations of parents become self-fulfilling. The role of expectations, which evolve over time into the school's academic reputation, is confirmed by the head prefect, explaining why she preferred St Michael's High than to other schools (G):

Because St Michael's is well known in Swaziland. It basically enjoys high quality academic success in school matric results. And St Michael's High is popular for its achievement of good results. By being a student here, it means that one has to work very hard and be highly dedicated to her work in order to keep the good name of the school. Basically it is such challenges you have to meet here in the school.

Thus it seems that the school, in maintaining the high standard of academic success expected of it, has built a moral order that binds the stakeholders together in a culture of commitment to achieving shared goals.

Within this culture, high expectations are mutual: according to the prefects, parents are expected to check their children's performance and supply them with the necessary learning materials:

The parents play a great role by checking our performance whether it is pleasant or not, if it is not they supply us with appropriate books, for example if I am poor in science/ maths/ chemistry or English. Sometimes they help by getting us teachers to give us remedial lessons...on areas where we have some weaknesses. In other times they encourage us... to work hard and try to concentrate and ask questions to the teachers, where we do not understand in class.... The problem is telling ourselves to concentrate and get committed in our work so that the next time we do better.

What is outlined here is a process conducted on a two-way basis but with the single aim of enabling the pupil to achieve academic success. The expectations of the teacher are thus boosted by those of the parent and the result is a closely-knit network of solidarity which has kept students focussed on their studies, despite the winds of change for 'human rights' blowing around. The head prefects confirm the effectiveness of parent-teacher solidarity (G):

...they have been useful because they have made students work harder by all means in order not to be embarrassed in the presence of their parents, due to their poor performance. Every time you write a test you always bear in mind that either my mother or father one day will see this test or results, so I have to work harder, I have to pass, because, if they are too bad, I will be ashamed, so I really have to work hard. So their visit to the school helps a lot.

The students interviewed actually expressed the wish for more frequent open day-type visits from parents – every term, or three times a year – so as to keep the question of parental expectations constantly in their minds.

The former head prefects were in agreement with the current ones concerning the vital role played by interaction and co-operation among teachers and parents in the school. They further argue that (H2):

...parents will contribute negatively if they are not supportive of what goes on in the school in so many things...or whatever is planned by the school. If there is a good line of communication between the school and

the parents as a result it is impossible to find a school tolerating unacceptable bad behaviour. The parents are well prepared and highly informed about what is going on in the school pertaining both to behaviour and the performance of students.

There seems to be a universal perception that the interaction and co-operation of teachers and parents within the school system is a good indicator of positive results in the academic performance of the students, while non-interactive and non co-operative responses are expected to produce poor results. Interestingly, this pattern applies also to the general behaviour of the students, suggesting that a wider sense of 'performance' is invoked by the prevailing climate of learning at the school: as the head prefects say,

One has to be clear that there is time for everything, such as friends, entertainment, etc, but should never lose sight of the fact that the most important thing is to concentrate on studies as her main mission to be here. The more effort the student exerts on her work, is the more she is able to do even greater things or overcome whatever it is that they have to do.

The students view extra-curricular activities in a serious light because they believe that they are not just a way of killing time for students, but, rather, another way of learning through doing, especially when it comes to communication skills:

Taking part in extra curriculum activities helps students a great deal, because they are able to improve their spoken English and vocabulary, because in debates they have to speak to each other in English as medium of instruction... This is possible with the full participation of children in drama, because it is a creative activity that enables children to write good composition and communicating to the audience with confidence... The participation in sports (like chess and scrabble) seems to help them think well, because they tease the mind, though many students are not highly involved in it.

So according to the perception of the prefects, the availability of the extra-curricular activities within the school system brings additional social and academic advantages to the school and the students, making the school environment still more conducive to the achievement of academic success and instilling values of self-control and commitment.

4.3.1 Learning and teaching culture

When the head teacher chooses heads of department he is guided by criteria laid down by the Swaziland Ministry of Education. According to one HOD:

Not really, but in my opinion, I think the head teacher looks at certain leadership qualities what the teacher has, but the principles of the Ministry of Education stipulate that in order for someone to qualify, he/she must be somebody who is a Swazi citizen, not having less than two years of teaching experience, must possess a first degree with a teaching certificate with more educational content such as the diploma in education.

In her perception the head teacher does not choose the person he likes or favours, but rather acts within the framework of certain policy guidelines concerning leadership qualities, teaching experience and appropriate qualifications as stipulated by the Ministry of Education. Being satisfied that he or she meets the requirements, he then recommends him/her to the Ministry of Education. Following this procedure helps to ensure that every member of the school team is capable of fulfilling the function expected of them.

Once appointed HOD, a teacher becomes part of the school management team and is free to convene departmental meetings whenever the need arises. According to the head teacher, heads of departments act according to their job descriptions (A):

They check before a prep book comes into the office if a teacher is doing a good job, although we also have to check and find out if they have checked and the teachers prepare. The head of department is entitled to know the scheme of work and it is a must that they know the scheme of work and check it too. They must orient the teachers or teach them how they should prepare, from that, it is a must to guide how does she want the department to be run, is her or his duty. In other words they do the job, which the headmaster is also doing but at the end he endorses it. The heads of departments are also responsible for allocating classes to teachers.

According to the head teacher, the job of the heads of departments is similar to that of the head teacher as far as the supervision of school academic subjects is concerned, except

that the responsibility extends to their specific subject only. To this one of the heads of department added the following (C):

Another thing is to chair regular meetings in order to promote interaction among the members of the department. And pass verdicts and suppose to reveal results on a termly or yearly basis so that they find out areas of third class, they share areas of third class and they decide how to strengthen those areas of third class.

They find this necessary both because they are competing nationally and because they consider that results are the best indicator of which teachers have achieved their goals and used their strategies successfully. HODs thus have a crucial role to play in building confidence in the school leadership and ensuring that academic standards are maintained.

Class Teachers play a no less important role in fostering the appropriate culture of learning among their students, by strictly following the procedures and duties laid down in their job descriptions (F):

To keep the register that is class attendance.

To take care of the marks per month and make sure that the students' classroom is always cleaned and checked on Monday if it was scrubbed on Friday.

To check for students who always offended and supposed to appear in the disciplinary committee with their class teachers to have their case dealt with. During the two year matric period the class teacher has to make sure that the students are thoroughly prepared for the Cambridge final examination prior to writing.

Apparently, the clear manifestation of discipline within the school is part of its working culture. If the teacher who is quoted above happens to encounter problems with her students, she tries to solve them through dialogue. In severe cases she scolds the children who commit the offence in the presence of others, telling them that she wishes to see a change in their behaviour.

4.3.2 Principal instructional leadership

The present head teacher of St Michael's High sees his role in the following terms:

The duties of the principal, eh! ...is to run the school...check if the time-table is functioning accordingly...if the teachers are going to class. Liaise with teachers, students, parents, matron and the community. In short being the headmaster means you are a go-between among all these people in order to do the job effectively, by coordinating everything in the school. There are lots of things you have to do. To crown it all you facilitate everything.

According to his perception, he is the school engine that sets into motion all the working parts of the institution and ensures that they are in touch with one another. He is also there to check that all parts of the engine are functioning efficiently, and to intervene if they are not:

I would start with the board... which constitutes of parents from high school and primary, the parents in the board are represented by the PTA chairperson...the head teacher, the bursar, the grantee, the chaplain, so everybody is involved, they come with suggestions of their own departments. For example I will come as the head teacher with my own request, for example if we are doing a budget...after I have consulted with my heads of departments, with the hostel department then I will lay down my budget. This is how I want things to be done, particularly my vision for next year.

In short, being a headteacher in a school dedicated to collaborative decision-making means that he has to be a go-between among all the stakeholders and a coordinator of their efforts. For the good of the school's academic progress, it is of vital importance for him to remain on good terms with all stakeholders, to make sure that they remain on good terms with each other, and to negotiate consensus or compromise where necessary.

It is also the head's duty to facilitate whatever he to help secure academic success for the child. His undivided commitment is clearly seen in his observation that (A):

We strategise...how we are going to do it. Make a point what we have decided upon is working. We have some structures of how we are going to do it as checkpoints somewhere. I...check if the teachers are going to do it. Check if the work is being done, checking some exercise books, they always have some checkpoints where you work.

It is thus the perception of the head teacher that students' attainment of academic success rests heavily on the close monitoring and evaluation of activities taking place within the

school system. This is certainly in line with Macbeath's contention that "effective school management has always been crucial in raising standards. This is particularly so when managers are actively involved in evaluation and the development of teachers in the classroom" (1999: 89).

4.4 Discipline

The head teacher made it quite obvious that St Michael's experience of academic success for the past ten years is due in no small part to the unwavering maintenance of good discipline at the school in general. Discipline is part and parcel of a good working environment in an effective school. And since the girls at St Michael's are not angels, breaches of discipline do occur:

There is a high good discipline in the school generally, that does not mean the girls don't commit offences. If they have done so the school rules and regulations are followed as they are. ... we give them manual work, hard work, and sometimes in some cases I use a stick.

When the head punishes children it is necessary for there to be consensus between the administration and teachers that they indeed be punished, and in respect of how they should be punished. Differences of opinion in such matters can interfere unnecessarily in the school's daily operational activities. According to Tomlinson et al. (1999: 8), discipline is a key factor in implementing a plan for school effectiveness because a school policy based on discipline:

gives children a feeling of stability within the school through a fair and consistent application of the rules;
emphasises learning through teaching, as the prime purpose of our school;
gives more opportunities for rewarding behaviour and attitudes;
allows greater involvement of parents and encourages home/ school partnership in both rewards and sanctions.

According to the interview conducted with the head prefects at St Michael's, the students are content with the way in which discipline is handled within the school. Class teachers and subject teachers are empowered to a certain degree to impose discipline, but there are

clear limitations to their authority in this regard. Incidences of serious misbehaviour that have resulted in parents being summoned have been rare, but are not unknown.

The heads of department insisted in their interview that the school policy was not to discipline the person but the act through the person. They try not to destroy the personality of the individual; for example, if the problem is that work has not been done, they give more work. Corporal punishment is used as a last resort. For serious offences the teacher sends the student to the headmaster, but for incidences of laziness, for example, the student would be given more work or made to clean the corridors. The principal sanction here is the student's own embarrassment at cleaning the corridors while everyone else is in class, coupled with the prospect having to make up the work she is missing.

The two former head prefects maintain that the school's tradition of discipline was established as part of the school's culture when it was still headed by the Holy Sisters of the Anglican Church. The nuns made a point of imposing mental or psychological discipline rather than physically chastising the offender, so that the offender was encouraged to learn something from the process. For instance, while others enjoy their break, the one being punished is detained in class to do some extra homework. But this work will be duly corrected, and therefore has the potential to have a positive effect on her performance.

This understanding of discipline, is also shared by the chairperson of the PTA. He sternly (C) argues that:

Well, as a PTA working together with the school, our constitution allows us to deal with disciplinary measures, because we are the parents working together with the school. Whenever there is a disciplinary case, this may always be some of the girls who escape from hostel or may be some of the students are not coming to school, or there may be misdemeanour of some sort.

The chairman of the PTA is also aware of the major role played by discipline in the effectiveness and improvement of St Michael's High School: "I think generally discipline

and also up-grading ethics for teachers... are positive factors for the achievement of academic success". According to the Swaziland Government Teaching Service Act of (1982: 47) and the Teaching Service Regulations of 1983, a teacher's ethical commitment is defined as follows: "To work conscientiously with diligence, honesty and regularity to produce efficiency" – which is indeed what the chairperson appears to have in mind. He goes on to recognise the teachers' professionalism, dedication and discipline, as well as their pride at being at St Michael's (F):

there is order, there is also discipline but the teachers are also dedicated. So teachers you know have formed themselves into a team. They have a culture, they have a pride of being teachers of St Michael's High School. You know they affiliate themselves to the school.

Essentially, it is good collaborative leadership at the school that has brought about this state of affairs, leadership in which the head teacher, parents, teachers and prefects have all played their part.

4.5 Language

At St Michael's and many other schools in Swaziland, the use of English is emphasised because it is considered the only vehicle of communication to the wider world of greener pastures. It is hard to conceive of another issue in education taken as seriously as this. According to the Swaziland Government Selected Circulars (1988: 27), "English is and must be taught in all schools". English is one of the official languages and is used extensively in the country as a medium of instruction. Furthermore, facility in English is used as an admission filter for students seeking access to tertiary educational institutions, since language proficiency is related to academic achievement (Cummis and Swain 1992).

The use of Siswati, the other official language, is encouraged for informal communication, to help students keep in touch with local developments, and as a cultural resource to instil a sense of pride in their Swazi heritage.

St Michael's High has committed itself fully to making the usage of English compulsory in the school throughout the day. This is a major element in the school policy for effective teaching and enjoys the support of all stakeholders. Is it a practice that is entirely justifiable?

The English Department has done its best to get students to speak, listen to, read and write English, even though students are not subjected to oral examinations. Speaking English at the school is more than a regulation: it might be seen as a unifying culture, given that students come from such a wide variety of different backgrounds. In sum, on the school grounds, English becomes in effect the students' first language. There is a great deal of material in the school library promoting English, and the librarian is on hand to assist students from 8 am to the end of school time.

In the classroom, English is taught according to the high standards of the external examination, and there is no doubt that the 'culture of English' at the school helps students to cope with these. It also helps them to understand their other subjects, which – apart from Siswati and French – are taught through the medium of English (E).

The former head prefect, who is now a lecturer at a Teachers' College, has this to say about the use of English in general:

Of the nine subjects that the student has, eight of them have to be conducted in English, so there is no way of saying "away with English", otherwise what would you achieve? So I value it even today... . If you are saying, "away with it", what are you going to be and what are you going to do at the end?

On purely pragmatic grounds, therefore, an implicit case is made for the compulsory use of English in all Swazi schools, seen as a gateway to academic success. To reject it will simply make it "*impossible for the students to achieve academic success*". This applies not only locally but internationally: Swazi children are being prepared in our school not only for the Swaziland labour market but also (H2) for the international labour market. The former head prefect warns that:

It must be clear in their minds that without English their life chances are only limited to their local environment. English language makes students more internationally marketable. If you go to any country let's take for instance the Francophone speaking countries, if you know you can't get lost there, but you will be able to communicate.... In other words you will not be completely isolated.

Such a view is also strongly held by the teaching fraternity of most effective schools in Swaziland, as well as the government (Swaziland Government Selected Circulars 1988).

The other former head prefect of the school, now a deputy principal of the Nursing College, also supports the idea of English in schools as a culture, because in her experience most examinations are written in English (H1):

If they cannot construct a simple sentence, then they will be having problems because seventy-five percent of their final examination papers are subjective questions where they have to describe ...discuss, and if they have a problem they will be unable to make it.

In sum, it is patently obvious that at St Michael's High School the English language policy is a key factor in the academic development and success of the students.

4.6 Relationships

Within a school system the notion of relationship refers to all interaction among the several 'human elements' of the system – head teacher, deputy head teacher, heads of departments, teachers, prefects, parents and students. For the school to work effectively and efficiently to fulfil its goals, a harmonious type of relationship is essential. This is only possible through the appropriate co-ordination of the 'human elements'.

In the operation of St Michael's High, there is a high degree of structural solidarity among those vested with authority: from top to bottom, they work together with common cause. Prefects are in a way closer in rank to teachers than pupils: they supervise students in the absence of the teacher, even during study time, and in the evening preps for boarders they are there to supervise. It does not matter whether the person in charge is a

prefect, a teacher, the deputy head teacher or the head teacher, for all alike are dedicated to the same values and achieving the same goals (E):

It is a watertight solidarity network whose situation does not give room of exploitation for the children's ulterior motives. In the classroom situation between each subject teacher and students, and other teachers, students and the deputy, students and the head-teacher, the solidarity gives a balance approach and it helps students to be successful.

For staff members, departmental meetings are not a mere formality but offer both organisational opportunities to boost students' academic performance and a chance to get to know one another better and get some idea of one another's strengths and weaknesses. For example, there may be teachers who can teach comprehension more effectively than composition, and who might therefore swap roles with a colleague so as to keep the effective standard of teaching in the school at an optimum level. In this way genuine solidarity, trust and openness characterize relationships among the highly committed teaching staff of St Michael's High. What has made this possible is a shared sense of purpose and accountability which, according to Sergiovanni (2000:132), "contribute to co-operative relationships, higher levels of interaction, higher levels of personal responsibility for outcomes, and higher standards and expectations, as well as the sense that the work of teaching is meaningful and significant."

Sitting in on a colleague's class is part of the school's working culture, particularly if one teacher is stronger than the other on a certain topic and is prepared to help. In this way a teacher's weakness is not allowed to prejudice the chances of students for whom he or she is responsible. "Team teaching" of this kind apparently helps to ensure that all aspects of a particular subject are integrated and well covered (see E). Moreover, as a head of department remarked:

As a leader, you are a role model and the students must emulate something from you. And you are at the centre of their success for their faith because they look at us. So it is very important that we boost each other's morale in order to be able to motivate others.

The vibrant working relationships among staff and students at St Michael's are seemingly influenced by the transformational leadership of the church, whose values confer authority and provide continuity and stability (F, A & B).

Teachers are always prepared to teach, even on Saturdays if it is felt that the syllabus has not been adequately covered. This is done voluntarily and not as a result of coercion from the school management (according to the PTA chairperson, head prefects and heads of department). But before it happens, consensus has to be reached in a staff meeting with the rest of the staff members, and the decision communicated to the parents through the management and leadership of the school. All decision making at the school is conducted transparently, with consultation among the stakeholders.

The PTA, which is responsible for initiating school effectiveness and improvement plans at grassroots level before the school board authority accepts them, is highly appreciative of the warm relationship that exists among the various school stakeholders. The solidarity network outlined above enables interaction and communication to flow easily from one point to another within the structures of St Michael's High. According to the current head teacher of the school, the supreme board of the institution – known as the Education Board – is inclusively accommodating of elements from other structures of the organization.

To sum up, the interviews indicate that the school's enduring achievement of academic success over the past ten years is due to the unity and harmonious relationships among its stakeholders, who are all highly committed to the attainment of the school's goals.

4.7 Resources

St Michael's is one of the few schools in Swaziland fortunate enough to have developed a mature sense of direction and purpose for the education of its students, as a result (at least in part) of its leadership's understanding of the importance of collaboration and

cooperation. One such collaborative venture currently enjoying the highest priority is the accumulation of teaching resources, with parents helping by raising the necessary funds.

While the staff of St Michael's are not equipped to their entire satisfaction with appropriate resources to back up their teaching, they are nevertheless in this respect giant leaps ahead of other schools in the country. This is the opinion of the head teacher, who regards the ready availability of appropriate resources as a cornerstone of the students' academic success and who has therefore pushed for the prioritisation of this issue (A):

The school has a well organized department willing to help needy students financially, academically, etc., and counsel them when they have problems. Textbooks and equipment are also available to all students in the school as well as human resources (teachers) in each and every class. Parents have been seen in this category to be effectively co-operative time and again, which I experience in running the school in form of money, particularly in the 8th grade.

The former head prefects, parents, and the deputy principal (B) agree:

I believe each and every school needs a library, adequate resources are a must in any institution in order to be successful in its achievement of good results. Actually these days our students need to be exposed to technology, particularly computers. Computers are a necessity because when they get to colleges or universities they are expected at least to have some basic skill in computers.

The provision and right use of resources like computers in schools will help to create opportunities for Swazi children at tertiary level and in the market beyond. A former head girl of St Michael's High, who is now a lecturer in a teachers' college and is also a parent, has a high regard for the availability of teaching resources in the school, because she attributes her own success to them. She states (H2) that: "The school which has an advantage of resources so the students do not have any reason why they can not do their work if they have such plenty of resources surrounding them."

Parents in the PTA are also aware of the importance of library and other resources in boosting conditions for the achievement of academic success at the school. As a result,

they have resolved to be very supportive of this initiative: according to the PTA chairperson,

Especially, parents sometimes have suggestions to make to the school in order to improve its academic programme, especially in line with the library. Some parents may donate books to the school or may advise about contacts, which can help, on how the school may receive some books.

The secretary of the PTA is also convinced that nothing is more important than that the school be well supplied with resources to enable the students to achieve academic success (see D). She argues that the school's success is due to its book rental system, which is a process whereby:

textbooks are bought by the school for all the children and rented to them to ensure that every child has a book for learning in class. Further to that the students are exposed to all materials, there is not only a school library, there is also a national library in town, which they can visit. The library helps them to go to an extent of intensive reading, which exposes learners to a wide variety and also teaches them not to rely on teachers all the time for materials but they can also be resourceful, and research if there is something they can not get from the library.

According to the same respondent, the availability of resources in the school has the potential to develop a sense of self-reliance, independence and confidence among students, as well as helping to foster a culture of hard work.

4. 8 Values

Discussion of the values prevailing at St Michael's will be prefaced by a reminder of what the term means in the context of research on school effectiveness. According to Beare et al. (1994: 180):

values are guidelines for behaviour. They are criteria against which we evaluate (and reflect upon) our actions either proposed or taken, and on the attitudes and behaviours of others. Values are weights, the priorities we place on things. Values are learned, internalised through experience, education and observation, and are subject to continual reappraisal.



More simply, French and Bell (1996: 68) define values as: “Beliefs about what is a desirable or a ‘good’ (e.g. free speech) and what is an undesirable or a ‘bad’ (e.g. dishonesty)”. The link between values and behaviour is underlined by Hogkinson (1978 and 1983), who defines values as “concepts of the desirable with motivating force” (cited in Beare et al. 1983:36). These conceptualisations will guide the discussion that follows, which for convenience’ sake distinguishes between managerial, academic, moral and cultural values.

4.8.1 Managerial values

The perception of the head teacher is that parental partnership is a key managerial value in the academic progress of the school. This view is widely shared by both teachers and students at St Michael’s High. The former headmistress of the school, for instance, maintains (B):

I think without the Parent Teachers Association, it would have been very difficult to run St Michaels. I depended a lot on parents, we worked very closely together; even during strikes I never bothered because they were there to come and intervene to talk to the girls themselves and so on. We had a very strong PTA. On fundraising we had several walks and walked with the parents.

Parental support – logistic, financial and symbolic – is a major pillar of school development, effective school management and a healthy educational environment. Most of the stakeholders interviewed in the school were quite aware of this fact: the present PTA chairperson states, for instance (C):

Yes, Mr Mabuza, the parents of this school are very supportive in the activities of the school, especially when it comes to fundraising for the school. For instance sometimes parents are showing interest by assisting the school in whatever various ways.

The head teacher also stressed the invaluable contribution made by parents (A):

Without help and co-operation from the parents, time and again I have experienced in the running of the school, particularly in the form of money, it would be impossible to run the school, usually in 8th class, this shows how much they realise the importance of education.

Parental participation is thus a major managerial value: without the educational synergy it draws from parental collaboration, the ongoing development of the school would be threatened.

The form five class teachers mentioned other managerial values that they regard as important in the school's academic success: staff meetings, the implementation of rules and regulations, and teamwork. Of staff meetings it is said (A):

...it is where we get reports from sub committees. Sometimes we discuss how to deal with problematic students who are always on the phone when they are supposed to be in class. Whenever they are seen in the phone they have to be told to go to class.

Part of the recipe for academic progress in an effective school such as St Michael's High is the holding of regular meetings of the full staff. These enable the institution to be creative, innovative and visionary through the involvement of everybody in the decision making process. Efficiency is also increased because decisions made can be implemented immediately.

The leadership of the school (A) also regarded the respect engendered for rules and regulations at the school to be a major managerial value:

There are rules and regulations of course, which make it possible for the control...of the students and teachers to take place effectively. So I have to guide, using the school guide and regulations so that they do not have to divert from the schools rules and regulations.

Rules are valuable because they provide an instant litmus test of the correctness or appropriateness of any measures or actions that are being contemplated. Unwavering respect for rules of course also provides the school leadership with an important source of authority. A further value mentioned by the head teacher is that of teamwork among members of staff, the PTA and school prefects (A):

Yes, everybody should be involved and is very important, you cannot run the high school as an individual. I am sorry to say that, you have to use all the structures at your disposal. Have some guiding of course because you are the captain of the ship. Prefects have their own structures in which

they operate. I always work with them, whenever they experience a problem they always come to me that is the same thing with the PTA, the deputy, heads of departments and teachers as well.

Teamwork is a measure of the interdependence of members in an organisation, as they seek to make it as effective and productively viable as possible. Teamwork is a reflection of purposeful and task-oriented behaviour, aimed in this context at maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational process at the school.

4.8.2 Academic values

According to the head teacher (A), the school places a high academic value on competition among the students. Chiefly responsible for this are the monthly grading tests, which serve to keep students up to date with their learning task and educators committed to their teaching task:

There is a high competitive rate among students, this is made by monthly tests, which we call mark grading and is done in the assembly. This develops a positive attitude among the girls. The staff is also good and dedicated, willing to work extra hours, the staff always work very hard without being pushed, though pushing is necessary sometimes, but the majority of teachers are hard workers.

The head teacher also evinces great confidence in his teachers and appreciation for the work they do. Hard work and dedication are important academic values for the teachers, and – as emerged from the interviews conducted – are recognised and appreciated by parents and children as well.

The heads of both English and Social Studies point out that (E):

...each student is attached to the tutor whom they choose according to their own perception and they confide. They talk about issues, which affect them from their different backgrounds.

The school thus places a high academic value on the learning and teaching of each individual student at St Michael's High, and this no doubt plays a large role in their

achievement of academic success. Academic values mean a lot in the educational and social life of the students at St Michael's, because academic achievement is what matters most to all the stakeholders.

4.8.3 Moral values

The school's care and concern for its pupils are not exhausted by the managerial and academic values mentioned so far. The teachers believe they have a moral obligation to see to the general well-being and morale of the students. The head teacher, for instance, points out (A):

We have well organised career departments willing to help needy students, needy financially, needy academically, etc., they help them, counselling them when they have problems.

The prevailing morality at the school is sensible, logical and reasonable about the nature of the situations in which students may find themselves. The school's moral values are characterised by *ubuntu* (humanness), as shown in a particular concern for the needy, helpless and insecure, whether psychologically or materially. Moreover, this morality is not a question of paying lip service to high ideals: as the head teacher puts it, it is in this area that action speaks louder than words.

At St Michael's, the heads of department for the various subjects and for career guidance place a high value on the total development of the child, so as to enable her to realize her potential:

Some of them come from background where they are abused, so we try to cater for any part of life which can hinder child's academic success. And we maintain handcraft that brings charity with that talking of the issues... We also have a club for students who do not have enough finances to pursue their studies ...they raise funds in order to cater for the needy students. This is done by students themselves whiles teachers are patrons of different clubs.

Thus the school's management relies upon the collaboration of staff and students in pursuing its moral vision. Its strategy is to help its needy members to help themselves and, in turn, to help others to help themselves. According to the head teacher, without a good moral basis, a student's achievement of academic success carries no meaning (A):

We cannot say the results are the only way to measure success because we have to bear in mind what kind of people are we building? Building the first class type of people who will become useless at the end? We do not look at the results we look at the...students both academic and also outside the field. What are they doing, are they both the successful mothers in the long run?

Thus the inculcation of moral values is perceived to be central to the educational and social development of the child. The school is equally sensitive to these values when it comes to the recruitment of teachers, actively seeking men and women of good character and reputation (A). In sum, the reproduction of moral values and the achievement of academic success are equally part of what the school believes to be its mission.

4.8.4 Cultural values

As already indicated, an important factor in the culture of the school is the significance attached to teamwork. The ability to participate willingly and effectively in shared or group initiatives is deemed highly important.

Most of those interviewed remain convinced that the use of the English language at the school throughout the day, perceived as a cultural value, has been significantly instrumental in the school's achievement of academic success. As the heads of departments argue:

The major reason in which we achieve these objectives is that English should be spoken in the school. Not just as regulation but culture in the school. So to speak others can use English as a first language. It is spoken, they are not forced to do so, it is as culture, as a medium of communication; and then we put as much information as we can in the library.

According to the perception of the heads of department, there is no doubt that the centrality of English at the school is one of its major cultural values, and one which has played a vital role in the promotion of social and academic development. Last but not least, the head teacher and the head prefects also regard extra-curricular activities as a cultural value that enhances the school's academic success. The head teacher argues:

They are helpful, they keep them busy, there is no problem they are all occupied, no disciplinary problem for the office. In short they minimized the disciplinary problems for the office and burden of coming to you as a teacher to ask for permissions, though you are always busy throughout the day.

According to the head teacher, then, extra-curricular activities are of great help in the management of the school and the promotion of self-management among the students, as far as their behaviour is concerned.

4.9 The school climate

In the educational context, the concepts of "culture" and "climate" tend to overlap, although a useful distinction is noted by Macbeath (1999:38):

Climate is often defined as the outward expression of culture of the school. The word 'culture' in its biological sense describes something that has grown over time and that has invisible, and sometimes deep, roots. In its anthropological sense 'culture' describes a way of seeing and doing things, a set of attitudes to life and accompanying behaviour.

Macbeath (1999: 38) goes on to identify five key features of a healthy school climate:

The school is a happy and safe place
There are places for pupils to go to do constructive things outside class time
Pupils and staff behave in a relaxed and orderly way
Pupils, staff and parents feel that their contribution in the school is valued
The school is welcoming to visitors and newcomers

These features may serve as a set of guidelines for assessing the climate prevailing at St Michael's High School, as this is perceived by the stakeholders interviewed. Evidence of a positive climate comes firstly from the PTA chairperson (F):

... after formal classes, the school leadership makes sure that the students who are not living inside the school premises also get a chance of having some study time, because the boarders always have some study time in the evening. They even come on Saturday mornings and carry out the assignments under the supervision of the teacher.

It appears that a good climate for learning exists at St Michael's, a climate in which students are given every encouragement to learn. Students who do not have appropriate study facilities in their own homes can make full use of the time and resources available at the school. The learning climate has recently been further enhanced by the introduction of the computer classroom, where students can access information through the Internet.

The PTA chairperson made the further observation that:

The students are also involved in other things like family life education since the school is the school with the family life education. The students are involved with AIDS clubs, and some of those clubs like that. So there are enough curriculums for the students to be involved in because it is an important element of student's life.

The existence of these "clubs" or voluntary organisations is a further sign of a healthy school climate: in Macbeath's words, these are "places for pupils to go and do constructive things outside class time" (1999: 38). Exposure to this kind of activity will help the students better to understand the hidden and complex aspects of community life, where they will one day play a role of service and leadership. That learning is not confined to academic subjects but also extends to other aspects of societal life in general, seems another clear indication of a healthy school climate.

Other factors contributing toward the healthy school climate at St Michael's are the "relaxed and orderly way" (Macbeath 1999) in which students and staff behave (see the discussion of discipline at the school, above), and the open, constructive relationship

between management, teachers and parents, in terms of which all the stakeholders “feel that their contribution in the school is valued” (Macbeath 1999).

The sensible and hospitable way in which new and inexperienced teachers are treated evidences the “welcoming [attitude of the school] to visitors and newcomers” (Macbeath 1999). According to the former headmistress (B),

Fortunately, we always had experienced teachers and again we got a new teacher, at times, fresh from school. We got them to understudy the old teachers and even had to go to classrooms and see how things were run, that helped a lot.

All in all, and thanks in no small measure to its enlightened, cooperative management style, St Michael’s High School boasts a healthy climate conducive to learning and growth.

4.10 Leadership and Management processes

Leadership at St Michael’s is unusual in that it appears to work by consensus. During the past ten years, in which the school has achieved excellent results, the leadership of St Michael’s has made full use of the following managerial processes: open communication, monitoring, evaluation, empowering, collaboration, democratic discussions, learning organisation, teamwork and consultation. Each of these will be explored in accordance with the perceptions that emerged in the interviews conducted with stakeholders at St Michael’s High School.

4.10.1 Open communication

According to the PTA chairperson, the level of interaction between stakeholders and the school is consistently high, particularly among parents and teachers. By way of illustration, he says,

And we also have some of the parents showing interest by assisting the school in whatever ways. And also some of the parents who are former

students of this school, also came back later to give talks to the school, and also try to encourage and keep the academic standard high by motivating students of the school. And also, giving general moral support to the teachers of the school.

From the statements by interviewees quoted earlier, it will have been seen that the head teacher prefers to take decisions jointly with other stakeholders, and is committed to a consultative and consensual style of management. In order for this to work, channels of communication at every level must be kept wide open so as not to hinder the free flow of information and opinion. For example, as the PTA chairperson points out, "...from time to time if there is need to talk about changes, the PTA is involved, they make contribution as to how the school should be run"; or:

...it is within our school policy and practice that parents should show interest to what is happening to the school, including supporting any activities in what the children are involved within the school.

In sum, open communication has been able to unify the various stakeholders and the leadership of the school, for the sake of the students' academic success.

4.10.2 Monitoring progress

A school should have some mechanism for measuring its own performance. According to Wallace (1996: 67), "The principal's careful monitoring of student achievement is the foundation for educational leadership...." This monitoring is done by diligently inspecting the relevant documentation, particularly the results of tests and departmental examinations, grades, and failure notices. The monitoring process aims at determining the relative strengths and weaknesses of students in various subjects, as well as investigating the causes of those weaknesses and devising ways of remedying them. In their constant concern with improving the school, the leadership and stakeholders at St Michael's make regular use of this process. According to Fertig (2001: 6), monitoring provides an opportunity to focus the attention of major stakeholders, like children and parents, upon the school's goals, and at the same time to give "a clear message to pupils that teachers

are interested in their achievements and progress.” The former headmistress of the school stressed both the importance of the prefects and necessity of monitoring them and giving them support:

We depended on them (prefects) to supervise the afternoon study. Of course we had teachers going around to check, to support them ... I don't think the school could run without them.

Monitoring is of course not limited only to prefects, but is also done for teachers by teachers, as a joint exercise to boost and improve each other's efforts, or as a way of assimilating new teachers into the working culture of the school.

The present head teacher finds the monitoring of school activities by the prefects vital to the smooth functioning and development of the school:

We have got the prefects, who are responsible for the running of the school. They have got their own status. It is them who tell me that this thing is not going well, and they come up with suggestions. I always try to help where they need help. Each class has got its own class captain to look for cleaning, making its norm in order to do its minor duties. So everybody is involved in decision-making, I only have to guide using the school rules and regulations so that they do not have to divert from the expected norms

In order for a school as big as St Michael's to function effectively, it is necessary for everybody to be involved as co-owners of the system, so that its goals and the satisfaction of achieving them are theirs too.

A similar thought on monitoring progress was voiced by the chairperson of the PTA:

Also the PTA chairperson has an interest in monitoring the general progress of the school and also discussing projects with the head teacher. Making sure that these projects are implemented on time, and also following the progress like for instance in these past two years we have built two semi-detached houses for the teachers.

Thus it is the perception of the PTA chairperson that the academic success of the school is due at least in part to the constant surveillance of ongoing projects.

4.10.3 Evaluation of performance

“Evaluation is the gathering of information for the purpose of making a judgement” (Beare et al. 1994: 148). According to Macbeath (1999: 151), evaluation is a way of showing people’s expectations of one another within a school climate that is receptive to critical review and improvement at all levels. The leadership and management of St Michael’s have adopted evaluation as an integral part of the school’s organisational strategy. It is used throughout the school, whether in recruiting teachers, admitting students, or measuring both teachers’ and students’ performance. This suggests that standards rise most rapidly at schools which themselves take the initiative for their own improvement.

With regard to decisions made at the PTA meetings, the head teacher argues:

The PTA decides but not to implement, that is the right of the administrator. The teachers sometimes think that they are the ones who run the school, due to certain agreements they make in the PTA, which are in conflict with the rules and regulations. If the principal is not wise, teachers within the PTA can lead a school to decay.

The head teacher’s evaluative skills have to be brought to bear in the interests of the orderly progress and harmony of the school. The head teacher evaluates the decisions taken from the PTA meeting and implements those he adjudges reasonable and sensible. It is his perception that it is essential at times to apply brakes in order to avoid chaos and disorder within the school system.

Concerning the criteria for evaluating new students for admission to St Michael’s High School, the head teacher says:

But we rely heavily on the interviews because I don’t want a problem of being accused of favouritism. So I have an admissions committee that does most of the work. It calls students for the interview, gives them the interview, marks the interview and at the end, comes up with a list of pupils who have passed the interview.

The interview is the major instrument employed by the admissions committee to evaluate and shortlist the number of students needed by the school. According to the head teacher, spreading the responsibility for admissions via an interview panel saves the school from accusations of bias or prejudice.

4.10.4 Empowering

In the context of school effectiveness and improvement refers to the ability of the key participants to make important decisions at the school level and in the home to improve the education of students. Unless all of the major actors are empowered to seek a common set of goals and influence the educational and social processes that can achieve those goals, it is unlikely that the desired improvements will take place or be sustained (Levin 1988, in Levin & Lockheed 1993: 163).

Empowerment at St Michael's High seems to be guaranteed by the structural equity of the decision-making process. According to the head teacher, important decisions are made jointly and consultatively:

the parents in the board is represented by the PTA chairperson, the head teacher, the bursar, the grantee, the chaplain, they come with suggestions of their own department for example I will come as the head teacher with my own request after I have consulted with my own heads of departments, with the hostel department; then I will lay down my budget.

In this instance, the school budget is entirely determined by the empowerment of the "key participants", whose contributions are vital to the ongoing effectiveness and improvement of the school.

The process of empowerment within the school system provides direction and vision, without wresting all authority from the head teacher: as he puts it: "you can't run the high school as an individual, I am sorry to say that, you have to use all the structures at your disposal. Have some guiding course because you are the captain of the ship." Decision making should be flexible and be guided by the group or individual with the best idea:

Then we have the bishop who is the chairperson, who also has a vision, then he would say, "I am not happy here and here: how can we come together?" Then a decision comes from the PTA, which is from bottom up, and up down, so decisions work in both ways. Orders are not always from up down, but sometimes they have to come from above.

The head teacher's perception of the school's management system is that it functions as an organic community of empowered individuals and groups

I will talk about heads of departments, which are responsible for subject selection; we are talking about head of career guidance who does the job, coming to English, Siswati, etc. There are heads of departments, even going to the hostel is the same story and I am always a go between. They contact me at the grassroots, which is the basic of the school.

In terms of this perspective, no part of the school should be considered less important than any other, because all work toward the accomplishment of the organisational goals of effectiveness: that is why the head teacher sees his role as essentially that of coordinator. He welcomes criticism at staff meetings, on the grounds that where there is criticism there is a problem to be solved. Disagreement is not always easy to deal with, but it is an inevitable consequence of empowerment

4.10.5 Collaborative management

The collaborative nature of management at St Michael's has already been amply demonstrated. One of the most important agents in this system is the parent body; as the former head of the school put it (B):

Parents...were part and parcel of the school, they were also the ones in the governing board. They knew about the policies of the school they helped co-ordinate and put them together and so on. If we wanted to do anything in the school we had to start with the school board and parents.

According to the former headmistress, for the leadership to work in isolation from the stakeholders endangered the effectiveness and improvement of the school because it would stifle synergic development. She stressed that heads of departments should be treated as partners within the school leadership system (B): "Make them feel they are

responsible for their departments; try to provide whatever the teacher needed, for example geography, we tried to provide whatever the teacher needed in order to make learning effective.” Collaborative management is a panacea for tension, enabling solutions to problems to be reached peacefully and amicably.

The usefulness of collaborative leadership in the school is further attested by the views of the heads of both the Social Studies and English departments, who say their responsibilities are (C):

To hold departmental meetings, check scheme books and preparations of the members of departments. Actually, are supposed to hold meetings and agree on strategies of scheming and preparing. They first start by relating to the set of goals to be fulfilled in teaching and decide what methods they are going to use to achieve those goals.

According to these two heads of department, collaborative leadership at departmental level and school level plays a major role in assessing and re-assessing the viability of teaching strategies for achieving the targeted departmental goals. Apart from helping to maintain a cordial atmosphere among the members of the department, departmental meetings also encourage input and help to generate innovative measures to achieve better results.

Finally, the usefulness of collaborative leadership is confirmed by the PTA chairperson: “There is good cooperation between parents and teachers, and especially parents sometimes have suggestions to make to the school in order to improve their academic programme...” There is no doubt that the school’s academic achievement over the past ten years is attributable in part to the close managerial collaboration between parents and the school.

4.10.6 Democratic discussions

At St Michael’s High School, staff meetings are held every Wednesday afternoon and last about an hour. They are used for feedback and guidance concerning the consolidation of

new teaching and learning strategies, and by their very occurrence act as a pledge of commitment on the part of the staff to the academic success of their students. According to the head teacher, the meeting agendas are for the most part determined by the participants:

There are issues which need to be discussed which everybody is not aware of. Those things I am aware of, I put them in the agenda for discussion, then I leave some space for them to write down what they would like us to discuss. So it keeps them at liberty to state what they want and what direction to go and stop them before they mess up the school. (As much as democracy is appreciated it is reasonable and proper to keep it under control and good guidance.)

The meetings would appear to be democratically constituted, though it is logical to impose a certain level of control to avoid the possibility of the unnecessary chaos which could result from unlimited individual freedom. According to the perception of the leadership it is desirable for a certain degree of guidance and direction to be provided as well.

The former headmistress of the school confirmed how useful such staff meetings were during her time:

...different teachers are looking at different areas of their work, so that if there is a problem, you may find maybe one class interferes with another class and you need the teachers to discuss that and see how best you iron that out. They are very useful really. And to coordinate plans, okay we planned at the beginning of the year. There are notices to be passed on; everybody has to know what is going on.

In an effective school, staff meetings are sources of revitalization, where strategies can be worked out for handling problems encountered by the teachers in their daily teaching tasks. According to the former headmistress, they offer a forum for the coordination of plans and the updating of approaches to teaching and learning, a place where unity of purpose and commitment to common goals can regularly be affirmed.

4.10.7 Learning organisation

As an effective learning organisation, St Michael's has regarded staff development as part of its brief. According to the former headmistress, the teachers were encouraged to attend workshops about their own subjects. I remember Nomsa as Head of English Department going out to Waterford to find out how they do things. Get into contact with other schools where you felt things were done better than the way you were doing.

Seen as a necessary and useful way of keeping abreast with new developments in a subject and its pedagogy, his kind of initiative is apparently encouraged, both by the school leadership and by the PTA. The chairperson of the PTA reveals the parents' involvement in the entire learning process:

One of the issues we deliberate upon from time to time is our library holding, and also we talk about the curriculum, because we are considering that we should have a diversified programme, so that some of the children when they leave school, who are not able to proceed with education, and can't find jobs, they can be in a position to employ themselves.

So it appears that all the stakeholders are aware of the school as a learning organisation with a responsibility towards its students and their future.

According to the head of the English department, this sense of responsibility creates an atmosphere of urgent and serious endeavour. Discussing the holding of departmental meetings, she says:

It does not have to wait for its usual time, as soon as the need arises, just like reporting from the workshop for any information, you have to come with other members of the department, so that they go straight and implement those strategies in the classroom while they are still fresh and popular at the same time.

St Michael's High School continues to be an effective learning organisation by endeavouring to keep in touch with latest educational strategies, and sharing new information and skills as widely as possible. The head teacher offers an example:

Already we have got some computers connected to the Internet. We are short of someone who will teach the computer permanently. Already we have got some teachers who went to train. They are teaching the others at the moment. By the end of it I wish that time the teachers will have been fully qualified technicians in library and the community.

Typically, the school leadership is fully committed and determined to see this programme through to fruition. Typically, too, the goal is not simply good exam pass rates, but all-round quality of learning with a view to the future marketability of skills.

4.10.8 Teamwork

Teamwork is an aspect of both managerial style and the general culture of a school that has been referred to on several occasions already. It is a concept in a sense inseparable from democratic principles, collaborative leadership and the shared vision that results from open communication.

St Michael's offers many examples of the benefits of teamwork. For instance, the teamwork among members of a subject department is enabled and enhanced by the exchange of views made possible by regular departmental meetings. According to the heads of departments interviewed,

...we get to know each other's strength and weaknesses for example. We invite each other to each other's class. The one who is stronger in a particular topic would teach it so that if you have a weakness you do not pass it on to the students because it does not help the students.

The result is that every section of the syllabus is well covered. According to the perception of the heads of department, teamwork of this sort facilitates the understanding of certain parts of the syllabus and helps to balance the teaching and learning situation within the school. Teamwork is undoubtedly one of the factors responsible for the academic success of the students in recent years.

Management and parents can also be seen as a team. According to the PTA chairperson,

We work very well with them; we have a school manager and so on. Usually there is no problem; I find everybody is so well meaning, there is a lot of good will among all the partners of the school. May be that what makes it possible to achieve a lot of things which in other situations may be very difficulty in doing the work of the school.

Teamwork, it seems, can achieve a great deal more than uncoordinated individual effort can. The head teacher is adamant that teachers and parents comprise a single team:

I won't split them because they work as a group; the PTA includes teachers and parents, that is the reason why it is called the Parents Teachers Association. It is where teachers bring up their views without me alone. To crown it all it is where the exchanging of views, suggestions, etc, take place.

Lastly, the class teachers see staff meetings as occasions on which teamwork in the school is vividly manifested among teaching staff members and the school administration:

They are helpful in the sense that the administration, the teachers as well as the matrons are able to form parity rather than to find yourself working on your own; and the matron doesn't know what is happening in the school. She must know. When we choose prefects, choosing of prefects also occurs with the same people, but in this case we also invite the matrons to come up with their views.

Apart from its obvious contribution to the overall efficiency of the school, teamwork offers opportunities for shared decision-making and leadership to all. This in turn helps to create a general sense of ownership and confidence among the stakeholders, spurring them on to yet greater efforts on behalf of the school.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

The data presented in Chapter Four will be discussed and interpreted in this chapter. As a qualitative researcher, my responsibility is to interpret the data in accordance with stakeholders' views concerning factors promoting students' academic success at St Michael's High School. The discussion thus for the most part addresses specific themes that emerged in analysis of the responses of interviewees, rather than general areas of school management and leadership. It delves deeply into stakeholders' perceptions of the factors deemed crucial in enhancing the academic success of students. As stated in Chapter One, the goal of the study is to understand and describe, through the emerging themes, these very perceptions.

5.2 Parental involvement

Without exception, the stakeholders at St Michael's High School felt that parental involvement in the academic and social welfare of the school was crucial. The ten years of academic success that the school had enjoyed would not have been possible without the moral, financial and material support of parents. The key recognition was that, as the PTA secretary put it, parents and teachers have a joint interest in seeing their children succeed. The main issues of co-operation between parents and the school concern working to limit error, to promote understanding, and to safeguard the reputation and integrity of the school. The head teacher and English HOD both stressed the vigilance of the parents in respect of any weaknesses that could lead to a deterioration in standards, bringing these to the attention of the school at meetings.

In sum, there can be no doubt that the synergic co-operation between parents and teachers at St Michael's High has paid good dividends to the students of the school. It might be added that the situation at St Michael's appears to be in line with current international trends. According to Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989: 43), due to the community's high expectations of schools and teachers, "parents are becoming more involved in the decision-making processes of schools through membership of school councils, of principal-selection committees and the like... [making vocal their] increasing concern over teaching processes and student supervision".

5.3 Importance and development of good leadership

The interviews suggested that the link between the quality of leadership at the school and its success has been profound. The literature on school effectiveness emphasises the importance of responsible, assertive and visible co-operation in school leadership (Sergiovanni 1991). Co-operative or collaborative leadership enables each and every member of the school community – teachers, parents and students alike – to feel confident and motivated, to identify with common goals, and to enjoy a sense of shared ownership. That such a situation obtains at St Michaels' was evidenced by the responses of every stakeholder interviewed. The interactive and consultative style of leadership at St Michael's High is undoubtedly a crucial factor in the school's maintenance of an impressive and enviable record of academic success. According to Sergiovanni (2000: 23), "Shared commitments pull people together and create tighter connections among them and the school, and these factors count in helping students learn at a higher level".

The academic success of the child is seen by the majority of writers on school effectiveness as the responsibility of everyone involved in the educational process (e.g. Per Dalin et al. 1994, Wallace 1996, Lambert et al. 1996, Slins et al. 1999, Slee et al. 1998). The role played by the head teacher in this perspective is one of liaising with all the stakeholders, including the teachers, the students, the community and the matron, according to the regulations and procedures laid down (see *Swaziland Government School Regulation and Procedures* 1978:10). A good example of liaison is the open day

occasion when parents are welcomed to school to see the academic performance of their children and do what they can to assist the child to perform better. The co-operation instanced by this low-intensity and indirect but effective supervision is a consequence of sound school leadership policy.

5.4 Expectations

According to Beare et al. (1989:43), "Society's expectations for schools and for teachers are obviously undergoing change." This claim is borne out by the ever-greater interest that parents of children at St Michael's High School are taking in the nature and quality of schooling received by their offspring. Parents' expectations are perhaps higher than ever before. What emerged from the interviews is a sense of their desire to see their children achieve academic success, though this goal is not seen as separate from other invisible, subsidiary goals, which involve the overall development of the child's character.

Parents expect there to be a highly diversified curriculum at St Michael's, so as to cater even for students who are not academically successful in the traditional sense. Parents and teachers both spoke of ongoing efforts to secure the necessary expertise to offer such diversity, and the PTA's full support for the school social welfare programme is evidence of their commitment in this direction.

Making St Michael's High an exemplary school in Swaziland was the second most frequently cited goal. Parents and teachers are optimistic about how active commitment on their part can help make a difference to young people's lives, enhancing their ability to face the future with courage and confidence. According to Slee et al. (1998:174), this optimism is justified because "the knowledge needed for the improvement of the schools seems to depend more on the nature of the pupil and parent populations". The enthusiasm and expertise of parents is invaluable to the progress of St Michael's High School. According to the PTA chairperson, an important way in which they contribute is by paying school fees on time and getting involved in fund raising to bring to fruition various school projects. This activity appears to be crucial, in that this interviewee's

understanding was that money was the answer to most of the problems faced by the school. Additional funding was required to ensure that the school had the facilities and resources to deliver education of the quality expected by the parents. It is worth adding that the lack of adequate facilities and resources is a major impediment to the academic progress of many schools in developing countries such as Swaziland (see Levine & Lockheed 1993:167).

According to the findings of this research, St Michael's is well known in Swaziland for achieving excellent results in both Junior and International Matric exams. This reputation sets up a set of expectations among students, staff and parents alike, in terms of which it is assumed that a student will work hard to earn her place at the school and uphold its standards and good name. This situation is well documented in literature on school effectiveness and improvement (see, e.g., Beare et al. 1994), and was the subject of comment in the interviews with two former head prefects of the school, who are now adults and have their children there.

There was a general feeling among interviewees that the regular visits from parents on Sundays helped to remind students of their "mission" and responsibilities as members of the St Michael's community. If a student's performance is poor, parents can ask her teacher what problems she might be encountering in the learning process, or the teacher asks the parent whether there are any problems at home that might be a contributing factor. This synergic co-operation and understanding goes a long way towards ensuring that the student achieves the academic success expected of her.

Extra-curricular activities constitute another method of learning that contributes to academic accomplishment. Debating, for instance, undoubtedly improves students' English communication skills, while drama helps them to be assertive, creative and expressive. Self-confidence is a crucial factor in both academic and long-term life success, according to students, the former headmistress and the present head teacher. Games like chess and scrabble help students to think more clearly because they tease and train the mind, while sport and other forms of physical exercise have their part to play in

activating students' latent potential and ensuring their all-round development. Thus both the former headmistress (B) and the present head teacher of the same school (A) remarked on the school's proud record of producing strong-willed, well-balanced young women ready to face the world.

Heads of departments at St Michael's also play a crucial role in generating and meeting expectations. Their responsibility is to make teaching attractive, doable, enjoyable and child centred, while at the same time strictly adhering to their job description in respect of checking scheme-books and making sure that the preparation of their subordinates is up to date and situation-compliant. Whenever the need arises, they convene staff meetings to discuss teaching objectives and strategies, with the aim of ensuring educational quality and consistency.

In sum, expectations, once created, have the ability to perpetuate themselves and involve all stakeholders in the pursuit of excellence. High expectations conduce to outstanding performance, which in turn generates high expectations.

5.5 Discipline

Discipline is another of the "checks and balances" that an effective school employs to ensure that productivity is uninterrupted and maximized. At St Michael's High School, discipline is another area in which parental involvement is encouraged. This seems to be a widespread trend. According to Beare et al. (1994:60), "Increasing numbers of parents are expressing support not only for a wider range of curricula and other educational components, but also for discipline...." Because development "is inextricably linked to the morale and feelings of pupils and staff" (Macbeath 1999:37), it cannot be sustained in the absence of a reliable disciplinary mechanism.

In the course of his interview, the head teacher of St Michael's High School made it clear that his school's enjoyment of academic success for the past ten years had been due to the

unwavering maintenance of “good discipline in the school”(A) in general. The presence of discipline in a school creates a good working environment and provides the minimum condition necessary for effectiveness. The rules themselves may seem insignificant: for instance, during school time students are not allowed to run in the corridors so as to not to disturb classes; which school and lesson starting times are strictly adhered to. The point is that their implementation creates an orderly environment whose predictability provides a sense of safety and security for all.

According to Tomlinson et al. (1999:8), a school policy based on discipline:

Gives a feeling of stability within the school through a fair and consistent application of rules.

Gives more opportunities for rewarding behaviour and attitudes.

Allows greater involvement of parents and encourages home-school partnership in both rewards and sanctions.

Co-operation and consensus in matters of discipline is vital. The principal, teachers, parents and students alike must be aware of the rules, (ideally) agree as to their appropriateness, and be aware of the consequences of breaking them. According to the head prefects interviewed, the academic success of the school owes a great deal to its discipline. They are convinced that the way their teachers maintain discipline “is quite okay”. Evidence that co-operation on disciplinary measures is on a sound footing is that incidents of misbehaviour sufficiently serious to warrant the contacting of parents have been very rare. This does occur more frequently nowadays, however, because parents are more concerned than they used to be to exercise “the legal right to be involved in the in-school discipline of their children” (Macbeth 1989:161).

Discipline has become part of the school culture at St Michael’s: every class and subject teacher is empowered to enforce it, within certain limits – as Macbeath (1989:160) puts it, “Teachers have a general right to inflict punishment but within prescribed limits.” Corporal punishment is used as a last resort. For serious offences the teacher sends the student to the head teacher, in accordance with the Swaziland Government Regulation Procedures (1978), but for incidences of laziness, for instance, the student is given more work to do, or made to clean the corridors. The latter both embarrasses the student and

penalizes her because she misses certain lessons and prep time for study. Students tend to respond well to this punishment, developing a more positive attitude toward independent study and the timely submission of assignments.

In this perspective, discipline is seen positively as “a manifestation of a well-managed school in which there [is] a clear structure, clear procedures and people with confidence to know what to do and who to go to for help and advice” (Macbeath 1999:37). As the head teacher pointed out (A), at St Michael’s High, a student is punished in the hope that she will gain something from the experience rather than for retribution’s sake. Discipline is thus perceived to be just one aspect of an ongoing process of character building. Rutter (1979), in Fertig (2001:4), found that pupils were more likely to stick to rules when they could see that their enforcement was based upon general school expectations rather than the mere whim of an individual teacher. Thus it was that almost everyone interviewed mentioned good discipline as integral to the school’s culture and consequent success. This is in accordance with the literature on school effectiveness (see De Jong 1999, Levine & Lockheed 1993, Beare et al. 1994, Macbeath 1999, Wallace 1996, Fertig 2000, etc.).

Discipline at St Michael’s High School has a long and proud history as a factor in the academic success of the school. The former head prefect argued that it was established as part of the school culture at the time when the school was headed by the Holy Sisters of the Anglican Church, and has been maintained to this day. The chairperson of the PTA also mentioned discipline: “I think general discipline and also upgrading ethics for teachers... will be positive factors for the achievement of the students’ achievement of academic success” (F).

Another former head girl of the school confirmed the importance of discipline in the academic success of students at St Michael’s High, affirming that the teachers were really disciplined and played a genuinely parental role. According to her, disciplinary measures were applied whenever necessary, particularly if students had violated school rules and regulations. These did not have an effect only upon the students who were being

punished, but also upon those who observed. During her lifetime in the school as a student, there was no formal parent-teacher organization such as the PTA, which is so active in the school today. Nevertheless, informal cooperation among teachers, parents and heads of departments helped a lot in strengthening the atmosphere of discipline in the school, creating what Macbeath (1999:42) calls “a non-disruptive environment”.

In sum, discipline is one of the cornerstones of school effectiveness and improvement. The successful achievement of common aims on the part of teachers and students is based upon the solid foundation of discipline.

5.6 English language

At effective schools like St Michael’s in Swaziland, the use of the English language is given serious attention because English is the most important international medium of communication. By preferring to instruct in English rather than Siswati, the school is not suggesting that the indigenous Swazi language is inferior or less effective in the general development of the country, but simply that it is an inappropriate medium for the writing of international examinations, set in a foreign land and marked in a foreign land.

As a school dedicated to the achievement of academic success, St Michael’s makes it compulsory for students to use English throughout the school day. The English language thereby becomes part of the school’s culture rather than just a subject to be learned. According to the head of the English department, this is additionally appropriate because the students come from such different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Facility in English enhances students’ capacity to understand other subjects as well, since 95% of subjects in the curriculum are taught in English (the obvious exceptions are Siswati and French) (E). As a former head prefect, now a lecturer at William Pitcher College, argued: “out of the nine subjects that the student has, eight of them have to be conducted in English, so there is no way of saying ‘away with English’, otherwise what

would you achieve? So I value it even today...If you are saying 'away with English', what are you going to be and what are you going to do at the end?" It is obvious that she is looking at the issue from a broad, progressive and developmental point of view and with an international outlook, rather than from a narrow and parochial point of view with a restricted local outlook. This is in accordance with Ovando & Collier (1998:5), who argue that English creates "opportunities for students to further develop and promote academic and social development."

The former head prefect wants the compulsory use of English in schools to continue, on the ground that it provides the only gateway to academic success for Swazi children. That English remains the major medium of instruction in Swazi schools demonstrates the extent to which it has permeated the national fibre and become part and parcel of Swazi culture. The former head prefect insisted on the importance of the role played by English throughout the African continent and beyond. She argued that Swazi schools ought to be producing students equipped not only for the local labour market but also for the international labour market (H1):

It must be clear in their minds that without English their life chances are only limited to their local environment. English language makes students more internationally marketable.

The other former head prefect of St Michael's whom I interviewed, now a deputy principal of Manzini Nazarene Nursing College, also endorsed the school's emphasis on English, noting that all the examinations at her College are written in English:

If they cannot construct a simple English sentence, then they will be having problems because seventy-five percent of their final examination papers are subjective questions where they have to describe, discuss and explain. If they have a problem, they will be unable to make it.

As pointed out above, such views are encouraged by government policy (see Swaziland Government Selected Circulars 1988:27) and strongly supported by the teaching fraternity at most Swazi schools and tertiary institutions. Nor, it must be added, is Swaziland alone in its recognition of the key role played by access to a world language like English: compare, for instance, recent developments in South East Asia:

The wiring of educational institutions and greater use of online educational resources and communications is heightening the importance of English language skills in South East Asia. Most material on the internet is of course in English and the United States remains the dominant producer of both applications and content. While online content in languages other than English is developing rapidly, most new educational content continues to be published in English only. When universities in countries such as Malaysia and Vietnam are connected to the internet, the technical impediment to the international exposure and collaboration are lessened, and English language proficiency becomes increasingly important. (Ziguras 2001:2)

That the educational potential of the internet is recognised by the leadership of St Michael's High is instanced by the head teacher's remark (A): "We want the computers for education to be introduced to every student in the school. Already we have got some computers connected to the Internet." This attitude is shared by the community that the school serves, particularly the PTA. The fact that most of the educational materials available, whether produced by western or eastern educators, are in the English language (Ziguras 2001), may well be a signal to institutions to internationalise their curriculum, so as to expand students' experiences and horizons and prepare them for life in an increasingly interconnected world.

Despite one's legitimate misgivings about cultural homogenisation, in this era of globalisation no society anywhere in the world can afford to hide in a cocoon of cultural uniqueness, and it is simply a fact that the ability to speak, read and write English has steadily become more rather than less important. Once more it must be stressed that this does not necessarily entail the downgrading or marginalizing of Siswati, but only a realistic recognition of its limited utility in formal education.

5.7 Values

It emerged in the interviews that no single factor was responsible for St Michael's success, but rather a number of factors in combination. Among these, and in a sense underpinning all the others, are the values held by the school. According to Leithwood et al. (1992:105), "Values ... provide a moral code for sorting a bewildering load of information and options that may confront the manager". More generally, values are mental models that the school has developed over time and that enable it to perform well academically with consistency. According to the leadership of the school, particularly the head teacher, such models have been tested over the past ten years and continue to be indispensable signposts.

The importance of values to the success of a school is stressed by writers such as Beare et al. (1994:180), who suggest that "[v]alues are guidelines for behaviour. They are criteria by which we evaluate and reflect upon our actions either proposed or taken, and the attitude of behaviour of others". Hogkinson (1983) in Beare et al. (1994: 181) emphasises the dynamic potential of values by characterising them as "concepts of desirables with motivating force". If the central motivating force at St Michael's High is the desire for high academic performance, then values provide a framework to motivate and guide every member of the school community toward the realization of that desire.

Hoy & Miskel (1996:394) corroborate this perspective when they say that organisational values act as a motivational inspiration for maintaining or resuscitating high learning morale and commitment to the task to be accomplished. Values are as important to an organisation as, say, a country's foreign policy in relation to its economic, political and social survival among other countries. They are not necessarily static, in fact they ought to change in accordance with the role played by the organisation as it develops over time.

Values may in this context be roughly classified as managerial, cultural, academic and moral:

Managerial values: teamwork, parental involvement, staff meetings, discipline, and the roles of heads of departments, class teachers and prefects.

Cultural values: compulsory use of English throughout the day, commitment to hard work, self-sacrifice in teaching, open day, speech and prize giving day, extra curriculum activities and clubs.

Academic values: mark reading, personal tutors, staff development, library upgrading, classroom and subject orientation, and teacher competency.

Moral values: (upgrading of) teachers' ethics, good behaviour of students, transparent recruitment criteria, honesty, trust and openness.

In the remainder of this section, we will have a closer look at the role played by each of these categories within the educational process at St Michael's High School.

5.7.1 Managerial values

In the minds of the former headmistress and the present head teacher, managerial values constitute the very foundation of St Michael's image and identity. This is because the school's management accepts responsibility for the success or failure of the entire educational enterprise. The head teacher, departmental heads and the PTA work in concert to ensure that the collective ambitions, ideals and principles of the school are realised. They are all essentially what Hodgkinson calls "practical idealists": "The educational leader as a practical idealist ... seeks according to personal ideals, to prevent the bad from being born and the good from dying too soon..." (1991:164-65).

This joint commitment to the achievement of academic success must be unrelenting in order to triumph, and must characterise every facet of managerial activity, from the most important policy decision to the ordinary everyday business of keeping the school ticking over. The leadership at St Michael's have done a tremendous job in raising and maintaining educational standards and students' performance levels at the school in recent years.

5.7.2 Cultural values

The interviews conducted among the different major stakeholders at St Michael's clearly indicated the influence of prevailing cultural values on the school's overall effectiveness. While cultural values are difficult to specify individually, it is evident that in combination they help to make the educational process at St Michael's conducive to the all-round development of the student. The emphasis on facility in English as a vital link with the wider world, the respect for a wide range of extra-mural activities, and the openness and forthrightness that characterises social interaction at the school are among the ingredients of the "cultural climate" that prevails at the school and conduces to success (see, for theoretical corroboration, Slee et al. 1998:119, Macbeath 2000:105 and Grace 1995:147).

5.7.3 Academic values

According to Beare et al. (1994:181), "In assigning values we make judgements about the worth of things from our peculiar perspective." There can be no doubt that, whatever other factors contribute towards the educational effectiveness of St Michaels', the massive value assigned to academic achievement, in the form of exam results, is the engine that drives the whole process. Every aspect of efficient teaching and learning, from planning teaching strategy through the provision of resources to continuous assessment, is given careful attention. Seemingly, the school's academic values in turn enhance the students' determination to work harder and more diligently so as to attain the academic success expected of them.

5.7.4 Moral values

Moral values are also central to academic development at St Michael's, because the school is concerned not only with academic achievement but also with the maturation and development of the characters and personalities of the students. The institutional 'modeling' of ideal behaviour for students has been termed "behaviour channeling"

(England 1967, cited in Leithwood et al. 1992:104). The school climate and the entire network of relationships that define the school community serve to “channel” students’ conduct so as to promote the values of openness, honesty, forthrightness, courage, dedication and loyalty.

All four categories of values are crucial to the continuing social and academic growth of the school, because they form a solid alliance in demarcating the parameters within which the school aims can be put into practice. Together they constitute what Fertig (2001:3) describes as the *sine qua non* of school effectiveness, “a consensus among staff about the aims and values of the school.” As “beliefs or promises from which other arguments are deduced” (Everard and Morris 1990:196), values are the reservoir from which policies and decisions flow out and trickle down into every aspect of school life.

5.8 Relationships

For a school to work effectively and efficiently in achieving its goals, harmonious relationships among the stakeholders are essential, and this is only possible through the proper co-ordination of its constituent organs.

At St Michael’s High School, there is a high degree of solidarity networking among these organs, mutually perceived to be working *together*: from the head teacher, deputy head teacher, and heads of departments, through to teachers, head prefects and parents. The interviewees all stressed the importance of this sort of relationship to the success of the school.

Particularly important, according to Hun (1985), is the relationship between parents and the school, and it is instructive that at St Michael’s this relationship is especially harmonious. This is not because there is always agreement between parents and staff, but because an open forum for the exchange of idea and opinions exists, in the form of the regular meetings of the PTA (see Hargreaves & Fullan 1998:114). According to Everard & Morris (1990:60), meetings are of critical importance in co-ordinating efforts and

effecting change. According to the head teacher, former headmistress and heads of departments, the open, democratic interaction that characterises these meetings has the potential to make teachers and parents a strong and united body, on the basis of trust and transparency toward one another (B).

The characteristics of relationships within the PTA extend also to the relationship between the PTA and the school board: the PTA chairperson is a member of the board, the board has access to the PTA minutes, and the two bodies co-operate effectively.

As Beare et al. (1994:68) argue, “more effective schools... are characterised by more participative organizational processes” at every level. Thus at the other end of the scale, an equal importance is attached to the relationship in the classroom between each subject teacher and her students, between the deputy head and students, between students and the head teacher. More than half of the staff members belong to the department of career guidance and counseling, and more than half the school teaching staff are patrons. According Macbeath (2000:105) such a scenario of commitment and involvement is a situation where “development and change can come from within.” Showing how effective is the extent of the relationship among the organs of the school system in St. Michael’s High, according to the understanding of both heads of departments for English and Social studies (E).

Staff members have found both departmental and general staff meetings beneficial, both for organisational purposes and as a context in which they get to know each other, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. For example, there may be teachers who can help students more effectively with comprehension rather than composition, and who should therefore swap roles with their counterparts so as to keep the effective standard in the school high. According to Early (2000:207-8), if invitations among teachers to take each others’ classes are part of their working culture, the prospects are greatly enhanced of the emergence of a climate of self-review and continuous improvement.

The PTA, responsible for initiating school improvement plans at grassroots level before the school board authority accepts them, is highly appreciative of the warm relationships that exist among various stakeholders at the school, seen as a clear sign of “shared commitments” (Sergiovanni 2000:23). The solidarity network of good relationships, whether from top to bottom or from bottom to top, enables interaction and communication to flow easily among all the elements comprising the structure that is St. Michael’s High School (see A, B & C).

5.9 School climate

School “climate” refers to the conditions that make up the general educational atmosphere at a school. The leadership and management of St Michael’s have made every effort to create a positive climate so as to facilitate the academic progress and welfare of all the students at the school, confident that “actions can be taken at the school level to improve the quality of life for everyone involved” (Wallace 1996:25). For instance, they make sure that opportunities and facilities for study are made available for students not residing at the school, since boarders have these in the evenings. This is just one instance of a policy aimed at what Wood (1987, cited in Slee et al. 1998:24) describes as “equalising life chances, open competition for scarce resources, equal cultivation of different capacities and level of educational attainment independent of social origins.” The leadership and management at St Michael’s High appear committed to the proposition that, if all children have equal educational opportunities, it is feasible for all to achieve the school’s goal of academic success.

Intelligence testing for allocating children to different classes or categories of secondary schooling is used impartially as a means toward realising individual potential. The educational policy at St Michael’s is equality-based, people-driven and task-oriented so as to be in line with the healthy prevailing school climate

The school climate at St Michael’s is so warm and welcoming that even students are encouraged to discuss what makes learning difficult for them, what vanquishes

motivation and engagement, or what causes some of them to settle for a policy of minimum effort in their academic endeavours. Such exchanges occur especially during the school open day, when parents visit to monitor the wellbeing and academic progress of their children. They not only help to resolve the particular problem, but in also enrich the climate of school home-connectedness which is so important (as Steinberg 1996:153 argues in Hargreaves and Fullan 1998:39).

Enthusiasm and zeal coupled with confidence seem to be essential to the school's positive climate for success. These qualities must of course be accompanied by commitment, hard work and self sacrifice for ideals to be realised, as most interviewees attested (see A, F & D). But, in a word, hope remains the key element in a positive climate and the chief ingredient of effective leadership in good schools; it also plays a critical role in fuelling the learning and teaching situation for success. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (1998:2), "it is institutions that create the climate and conditions which make people feel more hopeful – or less so." Without exception, the stakeholders interviewed (A to H2) stated or implied that the hopeful school climate at St Michael's both reflects and sustains the hopes of all the individuals that comprise the school community.

This situation has not come about overnight: According to Hargreaves and Fullan (1998:61), "good connections are complex, not simple; they take time to build rather than being initiated at the stroke of a pen; and they rest on deep understanding of what the educational purposes and the connections will serve". Hopkins and Lagerweij (in Reynolds et al.1996:67) also see the creation of a good school climate as "...a carefully planned and managed process that takes place over a period of several years." The positive climate which exists at St Michael's High must have taken some time to mature, though it is not known when the process was initiated. It has no doubt required a great deal of patience and serious dedication and self-sacrifice to bring about.

Perhaps the last word belongs to the PTA chairperson at St Michael's, who characterises the climate at St Michael's in terms of the good will that prevails: "Usually there is no

problem. I don't know how I can actually explain, or it is possible, but I think everybody is so well meaning, there is a lot of goodwill among all the partners of the school." His comment implies so much: an effective school, with an effective leadership systematically cooperating with all its stakeholders in accomplishing shared goals, and ensuring overall job satisfaction for all the individual group members.

5.10 Resources

St. Michael's is one of the few schools in Swaziland fortunate enough to have developed a mature sense of direction and purpose in respect of the academic progress of its students. The accumulation of teaching resources has played no small part in the maintenance of this sense of direction. According to the literature on effective schools and school improvement, without the availability of appropriate resources, the achievement of academic success is improbable (see, e.g., Slee et al. 1998, Squelch & Lemmer 1994, Ngcongco 1995, Per Dalin 1996 and Macbeath 2000). The stakeholders at St. Michael's High have made a collective and sustained joint effort to secure teaching resources for the school – though not to a degree entirely satisfactory to the current head teacher (A).

According to Beare et al. (1994:36), highly effective schools are those that have adopted a "systematic approach to matching resources to educational goals and students' needs". That this had been the case at St Michael's was indicated by the former headmistress, who said her aim had been to "make sure that teachers had enough teaching materials, teaching aids and so on, that is what we could afford at the time." She and her staff had tried their best with whatever they had at their disposal, seeking always to augment this. That the provision of resources at St Michael's was adequate was corroborated by a former head prefect, who insisted that there were always sufficient textbooks, that additional sources of information were often made available to them, and that they were in addition strongly encouraged to use the national library in Manzini.

It is arguable that the availability of resources forms the backbone of students' academic success. According to Slee et al. (1998:103), "school based resources and services are more conducive to education than segregated specialist arrangements". This is something the management at St Michael's appear long to have realised, making resource provision part of the school teaching culture. In his explanation of St. Michael's High's persistent success in international matric final examination results, the head teacher stressed the availability of resources as one of the major pillars of that success (this corroborated by Hargreaves & Fullan 1998, and Levine & Lockheed 1993:166).

What is critical is not just the possession of resources, but their appropriate allocation and utilisation. Good academic performance in the school is "characteristic of highly effective resource allocation," as Beare et al. (1994:136) argue. The school has well-organized departments to help needy students academically, psychologically and financially. Textbooks and equipment are made available whenever needed, with the aim throughout of providing the best possible education in the school for every student.

The use of, particularly, high tech resources such as computers at school level does not only give children a good background for academic success, but also helps furnish them with the experience and basic skills needed to compete after school for a place in the global job market. Parents participate in the process of equipping the school with appropriate resources through the PTA (C), helping to ensure "that resources are acquired and allocated in a manner consistent with the goals, needs, policies, priorities and plans" of the school (Beare et al. 1994:156). Parents have demonstrated particular concern with enhancing the school's library holdings, evidently seen as a crucial source of intellectual enrichment for the students. The secretary of the PTA argued that the academic success experienced by St. Michael's High owed much to its book rental system, which ensures that every child has a copy of the book appropriate to the subject and syllabus concerned. Furthermore, use of the library not only exposes learners to a wide variety of materials but also teaches them not to rely solely on teachers for information and materials. Tracking down information themselves helps students to show initiative and become self-confident and self-reliant.

Taking a broader view, Beare et al. (1994:136) regard a school's resources as including knowledge, power, people, time, space, buildings, material and money. It must always be remembered that non-human resources are meaningless without human resources; and, as Everard and Morris (1990:78) argue, "the true human resource is not the true person, but his or her efforts which will be jointly managed by the individual himself or herself and the management of the organization in which he or she works."

5.11 St Michael's from a management perspective

According to the interviews with stakeholders at St Michael's, much of the academic success the school has experienced over the past ten years is a consequence of its deliberate and diligent use of seven key managerial factors: communication, cultural formation, learning organisation, organisational structures, open system, leadership and self-management. A brief outline of each of these is given below, in order to indicate their overall contribution to the academic success of the school.

5.11.1 Communication

There are wide-open lines of communication in the school among all the stakeholders, irrespective of their status in the organisation. The situation would seem closest to what Macbeath (1999:51-52) describes as leadership with a "strong direction from the head, [and] clear structure and lines of communications within the school as key features . . . [and in which] the views of all within the school are listened to". No new idea or development, whether emanating from the top or the bottom of the management structure, is implemented without consultation and (where appropriate) the securing of consensus (see the comments of the PTA chairperson). In short, chains of communication among the board, the school and the parents are robust and reliable. This situation derives

official support from the school's constitution and the Swaziland Government Teaching Service Act of 1983.

Effective communication at St Michael's is also evidenced by other aspects of managerial practice such as teamwork, monitoring, evaluation, empowering, collaboration and the democratic staff meetings. All these serve to lay the "foundation of good development practice" (Slee et al. 1998:117).

5.11.2 Learning organisation

As one of the top ten most effective schools in the country, there is no doubt that St Michael's High displays the characteristics of what is termed a learning organisation. According to Fiol and Lyle (1985:203), cited in Begley (1999:39), "Organisational learning means the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding." And indeed, at St Michael's the staff is engaged in a process of knowledge renewal through refresher courses in their teaching subjects, which are conducted by various subjects associations or the Swaziland Government Inspectoral Department of School Subjects. This is supported by the leadership of St Michael's High, perhaps on the grounds that "education carries with it a commitment to learn from the good, from the best, from the ambitious and from the innovators" (Macbeath 1999:8). Certainly the school's policy accords with the idea that learning organisations should "essentially... focus on the core idea that all people within the organisation need to be seen as learners" (Fertig 2001:7). According to the head teacher:

Already we have got some teachers who went to train and they are coming back to train trainers of trainers. They are teaching others at the moment. They are bound to go down to teach others who are free to learn how to use computers, so that they can teach the students. By the end of it I wish by that time teachers will have been fully qualified technicians in the library and the community.

Wherever the workshops or in-service courses are taking place, the school always provides the teachers with money for transport and lodging to enable them to attend.

St Michael's is undoubtedly a learning organisation, with the entire school (including the head teacher) involved in ongoing learning, in accordance with the key characteristics of school effectiveness and improvement (Begley 1999:39, Fertig 2001, Leithwood 2000:72 and Aitken 1995:63).

5.11.3 Cultural formation

Heck and Marcoulides' definition of culture is narrow but apt in this context: "the way an organisation solves problems to achieve its goals and maintain itself" (in Bennett and Harris 1999:538). The management at St Michael's has over time built a vibrant culture capable of dealing with problems that arise in order to accomplish the school's goals and maintain its educational posture as strong and intact. This culture comprises a number of processes, norms and systems, which include: the compulsory use of English throughout the school day, mark grading in assembly every month, an open day, visits from parents to the school every weekend to check on their children's progress, regular staff meetings every Wednesday afternoon, speech and prize-giving day towards the end of the year, extra-curricular activity clubs where teachers are patrons, morning assemblies three times a week, team-teaching in certain areas of the syllabus, and so on. Out of these and many other practices a strong cohesive culture has been built at St Michael's.

All these cultural formations have been strategically set up and correlated in order to secure the academic success (Grace1995:110) and welfare of the students at St Michael's High.

5.11.4 Organisational structures

Certain structures play a vital role in making St Michael's High School an effective educational institution. The school board comprises the PTA chairperson, head teachers of both high and primary schools, the bishop, another cleric, the bursar, a grantee, and two prominent members of the community versed in public relations and money matters. The bishop is the chairman and the head teacher of the high school is the secretary. The members are all highly motivated and given to innovative rather than conservative thinking.

The board is the supreme body of the school; beneath it, the PTA operates at school level. The PTA consists of teachers and parents, with parents in the majority; its chairperson is a parent, appointed on rotational basis. The PTA works hand-in-hand with the administration of the school to promote the academic and social welfare of the school community. Its special brief appears to be to assist in developing an up-to-date educational infrastructure compliant with the technological requirements of the "information age".

Within the school itself, the **head teacher** functions as a coordinator. He/she has the final word in decision making, but the system of decision making is itself essentially democratic. For the teachers' and students' daily disciplinary needs the **deputy** is always there; she also plays the role of advisor to the head teacher. **Heads of departments** are responsible for subject teachers in their departments and every aspect of the teaching of their subject in the school. They ensure that the syllabus is effectively covered, providing teachers with preparation and other skills, and organizing exchange and team teaching when appropriate. **Class teachers** are responsible for whatever takes place within their classes, including both students' academic progress and their behaviour. They monitor these things closely in order to acquire a balanced understanding of each and every student in her class. **Prefects** help the school administration by monitoring the proper implementation of the academic and general rules of the school, as well as seeing to the general welfare of the students.

5.11.5 Open system

To continue to be an effective school, St Michael's has to remain open to input from all its stakeholders, both internal and external. This helps to ensure that the school has a well-established cycle of review and development aimed at the effective use of available resources for the benefit of students' learning. It must be borne in mind that "learning" ought not to be too narrowly understood: according to Slee et al. (1998:140, citing Macgraw et al. 1992:174):

School effectiveness is about a great deal more than maximising academic achievement. Learning and the love of learning; life skills; problem solving and learning how to learn; the development of independent thinkers and well rounded confident individuals; all rank highly or more highly as the outcomes of effective schooling....

In order for a school such as St Michael's High to achieve all these goals, the constructive interaction of all its stakeholders must be encouraged. The context of the school – its situation in a small developing country in Africa – must also be taken into account, so that the system remains open and problem solving occurs "in active exchange with [the school's] surrounding environment"(French& Bell 1995:89). The link between the school's external and internal environments is inescapable because constructive developmental contributions to the students' academic success come from both worlds: from inside, energy, enthusiasm and managerial expertise; from outside, money, information, teaching resources, etc. (French & Bell 1995).

The interviews all in their various ways proved the importance of an open and dynamic system, with adjustable mechanisms for representation, responsibility and transparency, for the continuing educational effectiveness of St Michael's High School. The final step in the pattern of this open system is the production of decently educated young women with a sense of responsibility both to the school and to the wider society and environment from which they have benefitted.

5.11.6 Leadership

Leadership is well distributed among the various structures and echelons at the school. As we have seen, it is essentially collaborative rather than dictatorial in nature. It is also essentially transformational, driven by a vision of ongoing development and improvement. It can be mandated by non-executive sources, such as parents through the PTA meetings, or the voices of students channelled through the prefects. French & Bell (1995:87) refer to transformational leadership as the application of inspiration leading to new heights of performance. This would certainly appear to be the goal at St Michael's, where there is abundant evidence of "a collective and collegial approach to relationships, management, decision-making and planning" (Potter & Powell 1992:13).

5.11.7 Self management

Most of the teachers who work at St Michael's High are committed to working hard in order to achieve the school's goal of academic success and thus to uphold its high reputation. According to the perception of both the secretary of the PTA and the head teacher, the teachers have thus created for themselves a good culture of self-management.

They do their work without being pushed. Everard and Morris (1990:245) argue that such a sense of maturity stems from a well-developed sense of personal ethics. However, it is clear that the personal in this instance depends at least in part upon a communal sense of duty and responsibility. This was confirmed by practically every stakeholder interviewed.

The fulfilment of the school's goals are of such importance to the teachers, for instance, that working in partnership or as a united group in planning, formulating strategies for teaching and assessing students' performances, have all become part and parcel of their working climate. Furthermore, teachers at St Michaels "see themselves not just as educating learners and workers, but as developing citizens" (Hargreaves & Fullan

1998:33). It is not the least of the triumphs of St Michael's that the school has become a shining example of a self-managed organization.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study has been to establish what factors make a school academically successful or “effective”. The case study of St Michael’s has been carried out so as to establish the school’s ‘recipe’ for success, with a view to understanding how its example might be emulated, so as to boost the capacity of failing and ineffective schools in Swaziland. According to Leithwood, Janzi & Steinbach (1992:31), “educational leaders use their vision of a healthy school much as a physician uses an understanding of the healthy, well-functioning body”. It is my hope that the ‘anatomising’ of St Michael’s in the preceding pages will assist educationists in diagnosing the ills that beset the vast majority of schools in Swaziland (and elsewhere in Southern Africa) today

6.2 Summary

This is a qualitative interpretive study that focuses on a single exemplary school. The research vividly reveals strategies successfully employed in improving the academic performance of students, through the full integration and utilisation of all the available resources, both material and human, and the appropriate choice of particular strategies of school leadership and management.

The study demonstrates beyond doubt that the capacity of a school to succeed and continue to improve in its production of good results lies in good leadership, careful management and a corresponding efficiency among its staff and pupils. According to the findings, responsibility for success is widely distributed among each and every component in the school system. What unites these components is a steady focus upon agreed goals.

The leadership and management of St Michael's High strive to ensure that the school's goals and mission are achievable through proper co-ordination of the available resources. The presumption is that every child is teachable and capable of achieving success provided her entire school experience is handled correctly. In this, it is clear that parents, teachers and students all have a significant role to play. The synergic co-operation among these three groups of stakeholders has played a major role in raising the school to the academic level where it is an inspiring example to other Swazi schools.

In one sense, the school's success begins with its exercising its right, through its leadership and management, to appoint candidates of its choice to teaching posts. Because new appointees are carefully scrutinized, they tend to adapt easily to the school's hard-working environment. The evidence of St Michael's suggests that all head teachers should enjoy the right to hire and fire, as a cornerstone for academic success.

The more closely that teachers work with their colleagues, the greater the school's chances of academic success and effectiveness. Teachers' attendance of professional development courses in various parts of the country have been found to be highly productive in the academic development of the school, because it is at such gatherings that teachers are able to exchange views and experiences with colleagues and thereby enhance their teaching abilities.

The leadership and management at St Michael's High do not lose sight of the fact that it is their responsibility to maintain their standards and performance as an individual school. The school does not treat the aspiration of students toward acquiring jobs after schooling as a separate issue, but as very much part of the educational goals they are pursuing. Education for employment is obviously a useful incentive. But according to the findings, St Michael's as a school seeks to produce citizens committed to fostering compassion, fairness, sharing, trust, collaborative engagement and constructive critique, in the conditions of great social diversity that exist outside of the school. In other words, the example of St Michael's suggests that an effective school is concerned with the holistic development of the student. As Hargreaves and Fullan (1998:53) cogently argue,

“Good teachers are passionate about their ideas and field of knowledge; social issues, locally and worldwide; and about the children and youth they seek to inspire.” Thus while St Michael’s has made the academic success of its students its first priority, it also seeks to contribute to the upliftment of the wider community by producing responsible and caring young adults. St Michael’s would appear to fit Levine and Ornstein’s (1993:63) definition of an effective school as “a school with unusually high academic achievement, self-renewing, identifying and solving internal problems, promoting students’ growth, improving academic achievement, concentrating and developing independent study skills and love for learning”. This would appear to be confirmed by St Michaels’ constant search for new ideas, input and information about how to improve their practice and achieve yet better results.

Teachers are traditionally cautious about working together with parents on matters of students’ academic development, but at St Michael’s High they are more than willing to co-operate with parents. Parental involvement has not diminished the teachers’ professional authority, and they are no less highly venerated. Teachers apparently learn from parents, as well as vice-versa, both groups united by a common desire to secure the best possible education for their children. The parents of St Michael’s students have been found to be highly encouraging, useful, and helpful in providing assistance and support to the school leadership and teaching staff concerning trends in and effective methods of boosting students’ academic performance. The leadership of the school has made a point of minimising centralised decision making and encouraging collaborative and consensual planning. As Hopkins & Harris (1997) argue, ideal management practices are “collaborative, have high expectations for both students and staff and exhibit a consensus on values, support an orderly and secure environment, and encourage teachers to assume a variety of leadership roles” (in Bennett & Harris 1999:536).

The findings clearly show the magnitude of work that needs to be done in order significantly to improve the educational situation in Swaziland at school level. The success of St Michael's at this juncture is an appropriate point of departure for whatever action is needed to improve this situation.

6.3 Potential value

It is hoped that this study will be of value to anyone interested in what it takes to create and sustain an effective secondary educational institution in Southern Africa today. What is of particular interest is that, although St Michael's is by now relatively well endowed with teaching resources such as computers, it owes this privilege to two resources that it shares with every single other school: teachers and parents. These two resources are the main pillars of school effectiveness and improvement, and without their full participation and co-operation the development of a school would not only be unlikely but would have little meaning and purpose within the community it serves.

It is hoped that the situation at St Michael's depicted in these pages may act as an inspirational template for others to learn from. What is significant is that the analysis of the reasons for the school's success came from participants within the system, rather than being imposed from outside. The study thus endorses Hoy and Miskel's (1996:385) view that "the opinions held by students, teachers, administrators, and patrons are highly significant".

Although circumstances and the socio-economic environment may vary greatly from school to school, the basic building blocks for success described here will remain the same: collaborative leadership and management, parental involvement, pupils' rights, open relationships, sensible discipline, appropriate resources, etc. The golden key is the synergic co-operation of all the important elements within the system. This includes the students, who must not be underestimated: they deserve to have a say in matters that affect them, and they have shown at St Michael's how well they respond to high expectations of them. Teachers, too, respond to high expectations and the challenge of

responsibility, and this study suggests ways in which they might initiate programmes of self-improvement at their schools.

6.4 Recommendations

This has been a case study of a girls' high school, and it is to be hoped that in future similar work may be done in relation to primary, boys' and co-educational schools, at the very least to ascertain the extent to which the findings of this research are generalisable in respect of their different student populations. Perhaps in a future study, more emphasis might be placed on finding out the students' feelings and opinions on how they wish to be taught and how they think they might best contribute to their own learning.

This study's revelation of the inextricable inter-connectedness of the agendas of the various stakeholder groups, and of the extent to which they have to liaise with and depend upon one another in order to pursue those agendas, suggests the necessity for co-operation at all levels of organisation and management. This in turn points to the desirability of an organisational-development (OD) approach toward the improvement of schools (see Schmuck & Runkel 1994). An OD approach is valuable for poorly performing schools seeking change because:

- OD addresses the problem as a whole entity and not as a separate element from the main source;
- OD considers all functions of the system to be important, with no single element seen as less important than another;
- OD can make poorly performing schools realise their potential since the main focus is on people and organisation, and people in the organisation, rather than on new resources or other input from outside;
- School effectiveness and improvement can be harmoniously integrated with OD in tackling the problem of poor performance in failing schools from both rural areas and urban centres;
- It is in an OD perspective that the real meaning of effectiveness in schools can be seen most clearly in action.

According to Matt Miles in Hargreaves and Fullan (1998:46), "seeking help is a sign of intelligence, not weakness". At St Michael's, seeking and providing help is an established part of teaching practice, and every school has much to learn from this example. As the

relevant literature corroborates, the more successful schools are those which reach out to engage more and more partners, and by so doing they become stronger and produce better results (Fertig, 2001). School effectiveness and improvement theory and OD are essentially complementary, and can function in concert in helping management and other stakeholders to turn around failing or under-performing schools. Obviously there is no automatic panacea for all the problems faced by schools, but to proceed using the two theories as guidelines must result in significant improvement.

The general point being made is that the proper, productive relationship between schools and communities is a reciprocal one: it is not just a question of upgrading schools to provide a better service to the wider community, but rather a matter of recognising that communities are a potentially valuable – even necessary – source of support for teachers in schools. This was possibly the most salient point to emerge from the series of interviews held with the stakeholders associated with St Michael's High School. Head teachers are leaders, but their management role is unlikely to be effective if they are not in close and constant consultation with other teachers, students and, most especially, parents.

In conclusion, the school is not a self-contained institution: it should look simultaneously inward and outward for constructive criticism and advice. The important thing is to take a first (consultative) step towards improvement. The consequence of that first step might be momentous: it might well, for instance, inspire others to participate, or it might raise expectations which, as we have seen, have a self-perpetuating dynamic. It is hoped that this study of perceptions of success factors at St Michael's High School for Girls might serve to inspire its readers to take just such a first step.

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Appendix 1: Summary of Matric results at St Michael's High for the past ten years

Exam year	Number of entries	Percentage pass rate
2000	89	100
1999	90	88.50
1998	86	90.52
1997	86	87.46
1996	98	88.04
1995	81	92.01
1994	88	90.19
1993	82	89.89
1992	80	89.00
1991	83	93.44
1990	85	92.33

Appendix 2: Interview schedules

HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

(i) Teaching experience, selection criterion and role of HOD's

1. For how long have you been in this school?
2. What promotional rank do you hold here in the school?
3. Relate what the duties of the head of departments are according to the Government Teachers Guide and Regulations?
4. Who is responsible for recommending heads of departments in this school?
5. Do you know what criterion the headmaster uses in recommending heads of departments?

(ii) Measure Of Success

6. How do you measure success and why?
7. Since you are in the third command after the deputy head master, what do you think are the major factors that contribute to the academic success of the students in matric here at St Michael's High School?
8. How do you harmonize the factors in order to be academically success oriented?
9. What are the objectives of your department and how do you make sure that they almost fulfilled in relation with the academic success of students?

(iii) Departmental Operation

10. How often do you hold departmental meetings a month or term?
11. How urgent is it for them (departmental meetings) to be convened timeously?
12. Are the deliberations made there helpful in boosting the academic success of students here at St Michaels? How?

13. As heads of departments, do you find the process of motivation among teachers and students helpful in boosting their morale in the achievement of academic success in their different subjects and how?

14. Do you ever encounter some disciplinary problems in your work as an hindrance to the academic success of students?

15. How do you deal with them?

(iv) Value of integrated executive meetings

16. How often do you meet as top brass (head teacher, deputy head-teacher, HODs and class teachers) of the school?

17. What can you say of such meetings, are they useful or not in as far as the academic success of the school is concerned? Why?

18. Since the school is a very complex entity, how academically viable is the link of solidarity among the headmaster, deputy-head, heads of departments, teachers and prefects in the achievement of academic success for the school?

19. Can you tell me more about the link of the school solidarity administrative net work as to how it assists in improving the academic success of students as well as its strength and weaknesses if they are any?

(v) Parental support

20. Which particular instances of school development have you found the solidarity link useful in maintaining the academic success of the school?

21. Do you have the knowledge of any role played by the PTA and the School Committee that helps bring about academic success of students within the school's organizational structure?

22. Will you please explain how is this possible?

23. What are the goals of your department/departments and how will you make sure that they are fulfilled in contributing to the academic success of students?

24. What further advice can you give to a poor performing school to help it improve its future prospects of academic success?

PTA EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

(i) Role of PTA in the school

1. What is its function in the system of St Michael's High School?
2. Does the PTA have goals and can you tell me what are they in relation to St Michael's High School?
3. How do you go about in fulfilling them so that they are inline with the academic success of the school?
4. What is the role of the PTA chairman in the school system?

(ii) Success encouragement

5. How does the PTA measure success?
6. Can you tell more about factors which contribute to the academic success of students here at St Michael's High School?
7. How does each one of them help in contributing to the academic success of students?
8. How do you find the link among yourselves as parents and teachers in as far as the educationally viability generating the academic success of students is concerned?

(iii) Importance of meetings

9. How often do you hold PTA meetings?
10. Why is it important for the PTA as an organization to hold meetings?
11. Do you find these meetings highly successful for the intended goals to be accomplished?
12. On what type of academic success issues do you deliberate upon in your meetings and why?

13. What bearing do they have in the achievement of academic success of students here at St Michael's?

14. How strong is the cooperation among yourselves, teachers and the school committee in bringing the necessary academic success of students?

15. How is such made possible?

(iv) Constitutional limitation of PTA's involvement (students' achievement of academic success)

16. To what extent are you allowed by your constitution to intervene in the school matters particularly those that have to do with the discipline and improvement of students' academic success?

17. Do you ever find yourselves encouraging parents to motivate their children to commit themselves fully in the process of learning so that they can achieve the aspired academic success and how do you do it?

18. What other educational plans/ dreams do you have for facilitating a health successful environment of the school so that students can manage to achieve the highly appreciated academic success?

19. How do you hope to implement them?

20. What piece of advice can you share with us for a future school longing to achieve an acceptable level of academic success especially those that are apparently poorly performing?

HEADPREFECTS

(i) Experience in the school

For how long have you been at St Michael's High School?

Do you like it here? Tell me why?

As students who have been in this school a little longer, what is your measure of success?

Can you tell me about factors which you think contribute to the academic success of the school?

Among the factors you have mentioned, choose three and explain how each one of them helps in the contribution of students' academic success in your school especially the form five class.

What can you say about the behaviour of students in general pertaining to the attainment of students' academic success? Is there any meaningful role it plays?

Can you explain how is this possible?

How does a student contribute to her/ his academic success?

Do you like participating in extra-curriculum activities, such as sports, music, debates drama, etc?

Do you find them helpful or not in as far as the achievement of students' academic success is concerned? Explain how.

(ii) Parents' role in academic success

What role do parents play in the achievement of students academic success?

How often are they (parents) allowed to visit the school per term as a way of boosting the students capacity for attaining academic success?

Have such interactions been helpful in producing the desired effects to the students academic success? Can you relate some instances where such efforts have been found to be so helpful?

In extreme cases of disciplinary measures against students' deviant behaviour how did you find the co-operation between parent and the school?

Do you appreciate the continuation of such a role for the progress of students' academic success? Why?

(iii) Leadership preparation for prefects

Can you briefly explain how your school time is budgeted per term for these (extra curriculum activities)?

What is the difference in your duties as head prefects and that of others as ordinary prefects?

What role do you consider as important in the facilitation of academic success by class teachers/ subject teachers? Why?

Do you also see students having an important role in facilitating their own learning situation? How far do you think they should go in doing so?

Since you are prefects and the ones closer to all teachers and the school management, will you tell me how prefects are chosen?

How much input do you have as a student body in this process in order to be fully confident about it as a practical product of your own making?

(iv) School leadership

What is your role as prefects in the school system in as far as the attainability of students' academic success is concerned?

Explain more about the link that is there in your operation in the school and its total administrative structure (headmaster, deputy, heads of departments, teachers and students) as to how it jointly harnesses the academic success of students?

How effective is such a work team in the improvement of students success?

Is there any area where you wish the system under which you operate could be improved and how?

What are your aims or goals as students in the school you would like to be fulfilled?

What can you say about the availability of teaching resources?

As opinion leaders what piece of advice can you give to other students in order to work efficiently towards the achievement of the intended academic success?

(v) School climate

What can you say about morning assemblies in as far as their contribution to students' achievement of academic success is concerned? Do you find such an exercise important or not?

How important are the announcements that are made in the assembly keeping students on their tiptoe for academic success?

To what extent are you allowed to exercise your democratic right in contributing to the processes leading towards your academic success as students?

What role do you play as prefects during the speech and prize giving day?

How diversified is your subject-curriculum to enable you to have a certain degree of freedom for the subject choice so that you may be able to accomplish academic success?

How is the process monitored and controlled?

Do you find recreation in school social activities helpful in the attainment of academic success?

CLASS TEACHERS

(i) Class teacher's management, experience and leadership

What is the criterion of being a form five class teacher here at St Michael's High?

Being a class teacher is it less or highly demanding?

For how long have you been a class teacher for form five?

What are the most crucial duties of a class teacher particularly in your case?

Did you encounter any problem in your work as a class teacher?

For how long does it take you to prepare your students for their academic success?

Will you tell me how you manage to solve problems you encounter in your daily classroom teaching activities?

(ii) Class teacher's perception of success factors

How do you define success in a school environment like yours?

Can you relate and explain to me all factors, which contribute to the academic success of students?

Among the factors you have already related and explained which ones do you think are crucial in shaping the academic success of your students and why?

(iii) Teamwork leadership and co-operation

Since you are not the only teacher who take all the subjects in form five, tell me how do you co-ordinate the others in order to achieve the same goal of success?

Do you think students have a role to play in the creation of their own achievement of academic success? How?

(iv) Decision-making process

Does the school conduct any staff meetings?

How often does it conduct them in a month or term?

What sort of matters usually deliberated in your staff meetings?

(v) Value of staff meetings

Are they helpful, and can you explain why?

In your preparation for the achievement of the students academic success, do you ever encounter any disciplinary problems and how do deal with them?

How do you feel if the student fails to achieve success in the final matric examination?

(vi) Parental involvement/prefects

Do you ever interact with the children you teach as a good gesture of facilitating a healthy academic atmosphere of students success? At what level do you do so? Do you find such interaction helpful in the facilitation of students' academic success? Can explain more how is it possible? Can you explain to me the difference between the PTA and the school committee and relate the extent in which they are allowed to assist in the development of opportunities for students' academic success?

(vii) Principal involvement/prefects

What role does the principal play in the whole process of students' achievement of academic success? Can you relate for instance whereby you have seen him fully committed and involved in the facilitation of students academic success? What can you say of the role played by prefects in the accomplishment of students' academic success?

FORMER HEADMISTRESS

(i) Administrative and teaching experience

For how long have you been teaching at St Michael's High School?
And for how long have you been the headmistress of the same school?
Can you tell me more about your duties as a headmistress in the same school?
Were heads of departments well established in the school during your lifetime?
How helpful were they
Were staff meetings conducted at that time?
How was the agenda formed?
How many times did you conduct meetings in a month or term?
Did you find them useful?
Could you please relate how?

I hope the system of prefects during your lifetime in the school were your administrative tools, could you tell me how important were they in bringing about the desired success of the school?

(ii) Administrative perception of success

What is your understanding of success?

How did you measure success?

Do you think the involvement of parents in the school affairs or the educational activities of their children had an impact in the achievement of students' academic success of students? How?

To what extent were parents involved in as far as your constitution was concerned?

As an old veteran and a seasoned manager, how did you find the usefulness of the following components of the school system in contributing to the success of the students in the school: teachers, prefects, heads of departments, deputy head, yourself and the PTA?

What can say about the contribution curriculum activities in as far as the achievement of students' academic success is concerned?

(iii) Importance of resources

How was the situation in your school pertaining to the availability of resources, such as teaching materials, staff development and recruitment?

Can you give me the historical background of your school, from the time it started operating as a high school until the time you got a retirement?

What other factors do you know helped in bringing about the success of your school?

What was the motto of your school?

What future advice pertaining to success factors can you share with me?

FORMER HEAD PREFECTS

For how long was your studentship at St Michael's High School?

What factors did you consider as crucial in contributing towards the academic success of students at your school (St Michael's High)?

Do you still hold those convictions authentic even now? Why?

Today what can you tell me about the understanding of factors facilitating the academic success of students since are now both the parent and a teacher?

Will you relate more about those, which you consider as crucial in the contribution of students' academic success?

Do you think a school by its own virtue has a certain role to play in bringing about the academic success of students? Can you explain how is this feasible?

What role did your former headmistress play in facilitating your academic success as students in the school?

Do you remember any meaningful role played by your parents in boosting your academic success? What was its nature and how was it played?

How did you find teachers in as far as your full preparation of engaging in the process of achieving academic success was concerned?

Do think the way in which prefects were chosen also contributed to the students' achievement of academic success?

How were prefects chosen during your lifetime there?

Did you appreciate the way you were chosen there as prefects, and could you explain why?

Now being a parent and leader of high responsibility are you still holding high values in those factors, which enabled you to achieve academic success even among students of today? If so why?

What can you say about teachers, heads of departments, head teacher and parents in handling the situation for the good of students' academic success?

Will you tell me more as to how was the teaching situation at St Michael's High in as far as the availability of teaching resources and staff were concerned?

What piece of advice can you give to me pertaining to the future acquisition of knowledge for the academic success among students?

As part of the administration what role do you play in order to ensure the continuous students academic success in the school?

