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Rhodes University
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**Stakeholders' perceptions of the shift to democratic
leadership in a secondary school in the Eastern Cape: A case
study**

Submitted by

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

M Ed in Education Leadership and Management

June 2007

ABSTRACT

The advent of political democracy in South Africa in 1994 gave rise to new policy in education promoting democratic and participative ways of managing and leading schools. The intention was both to break from the apartheid past which was characterised by an authoritarian, non-participative mindset, as well as to point the way for future education development. Principals of schools were expected to develop structures and adopt management and leadership styles which were participative, inclusive and developmental.

Many principals would not have been prepared for this shift in mindset, and notions of full participation in governance by parents, and representation of learners through constituted bodies would have been new to them.

In this case study of one semi-urban secondary school in the Eastern Cape the researcher sought to establish whether and to what extent the school had moved towards the new management and leadership approaches. The study is interpretive in orientation, and made use of interviews and document analysis.

This research has found that the school had democratised its management and leadership to a considerable degree, but that this was not necessarily due to profound changes on the part of the principal's leadership. The principal emerged as a democratic leader by nature. More significant seem to be the structures which the school had put in place, both officially and internally, to promote widespread participation and the distribution of leadership. This decentralised system of management has contributed to a distinct organisation culture in the school characterised by warmth, openness and *ubuntu*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my great appreciation to the following people for assisting in this research. Had it not been for their help, advice and encouragement, this achievement would not have been possible:

- My supervisor, Prof. Hennie van der Mescht for his sound and constructive guidance throughout this study. I highly appreciate his assistance
- Judy Cornwell, the Department of Education librarian, for her kind support
- The principal of the school I researched, for having allowed me to conduct research in his school and all my respondents who willingly presented themselves as interviewees
- My family, especially my wife, Cawsi for having been behind me throughout this project
- And finally, The Creator (UMDALI) for giving me health and strength to pursue this work.

Pencil, ink marks and highlighting ruin books for other readers.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Context and rationale

Since the collapse of apartheid the schooling system in South Africa has undergone fundamental changes, ranging from re-organisation at system level to curriculum developments that impact on the classroom. The focus of this study is at the level of organisation, in particular the role of leadership of the school as organisation. At this level the most significant change could be described as a shift from autocratic, top-down control to participative, consultative management and leadership practices. This is what characterises the vision of education leadership and schooling in policy documents, a position strongly supported by literature in the field. The purpose of this research was to investigate, through a case study of a historically disadvantaged school, to what extent key role players felt that this shift on thinking was reflected in practice.

The key features of the new approach to education management are captured in several policy documents, notably the influential *Task Team Report* (DoE 1996). The report proposes a collaborative approach to educational management stressing the inclusion of all stakeholders. Stakeholders here refer to educators as well as parents and learners. A feature of the pre-democratic education system was the non-involvement of members other than the principal and other officially appointed school managers. In this sense the *Task Team Report* is attempting to undo some of the perceptions that plagued the system in the past, stressing that the school has to have the support of all of its members as well as the broader community. To accomplish this three new bodies were brought into existence: The School Management Team (SMT), the School Governing Body (SGB) and the Learners Representative Council (LRC). The creation of these new bodies signaled the Department of Education's (DoE) intent to bring about a culture of participation and consultation in the management and governance of schools.

The *Task Team Report* (DoE 1996) also views the school as a learning organization. This idea supports individual and collective continuous learning. The culture of a school needs to be 'learning organization' friendly. It has to have a learning culture which suggests a willingness to work together and learn from each other, an openness to continuous learning and a readiness to accept change. As Lakomski (2005:39) puts it:

Organizations ought to transform themselves into learning organizations so that they might meet all unexpected challenges successfully. Ongoing learning is believed to be the best preparation for the future, and it is the leader's responsibility to see that it happens.

The notion of working and learning together is developed into a strong metaphor by Sergiovanni (1992:41) who sees schools as communities rather than "organisations". The idea is compelling, especially bearing in mind a view of 'community' such as this one suggested by Peck (1987:59):

A group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other, make others' conditions our own.

The above statement by Peck (1987) implies the 'oneness' of a group of people who could be described as the community. If in any school educators could have such behavioural characteristics the school is likely to become a learning organization. In such situations educators can work together and learn together. This can create a strong culture where educators adhere to common professional norms, values and beliefs.

Thurlow, Bush and Coleman (2003:79) also stress the importance of community participation in the new South Africa as follows:

A particularly South Africa manifestation of community participation is that of 'stakeholder' participation. This implies that in educational governance

structures, legitimate stakeholders should be granted the right to participate. Thus, the South African Schools' Act makes provision for the participation of stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students and the community in governing bodies.

The fact that the notion of "stakeholder' participation" is seen as a "particularly South African" phenomenon points to the country's troubled political and education history, a history that has left a legacy that, in my opinion, still undermines attempts to bring about transformation and change.

My own experience as principal of a secondary school in the Eastern Cape in South Africa motivated this research. In my attempts to move towards a participative democracy in the management of the school I have encountered many problems and challenges, and many of these can be traced back to the legacy of apartheid. It is, for example, very difficult to involve parents in school governance. The establishment and development of SGBs in which parents form the majority is one of the cornerstones of the new approach to management, but I have found that parents are reluctant to participate in school activities. Parents do not attend meetings that are called and alternative measures have to be resorted to. It seems that parents still believe that school activities are for teachers. Even the key issue of the disciplining of learners is left to teachers, and some parents seem to have given up on disciplining their children. These attitudes have their roots in the previous education dispensation where parents were not encouraged to participate in their children's schooling and schools were regarded as organs of the state.

My experience is also that educators at my school are not keen to work together. They are too individualistic and their resistance to teamwork frustrates attempts to manage and lead participatively. Management Team members, in particular, resist change and want things to be done the 'old' way. When something new is introduced; they usually say "I have been here for ten years; this is the first time that this has happened at this school". They seem to resist learning new approaches and seem to embody a culture that is resistant to change, this despite the overwhelming evidence that change is inevitably part of life. As Moloï (2005:1) puts it: "He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator." Another

challenge in my school is that the HOD appears to be aloof from other educators. By this I mean in most cases they are not open to suggestions of post level 1 educators. They seem also to have narrow conceptions of what their roles entail, and the notion of learning from each other has not taken root.

These phenomena are of course not uncommon, nor are they unique to South Africa. Bennett, Crawford and Cartwright (2003:198), for example, identify an “isolated professional culture common in schools as an obstacle to the development of teacher leadership.” My argument is simply that in South Africa, given its troubled past, teacher apathy, unwillingness to work together and embrace change and unprofessional conduct - such as late-coming and absenteeism – have a particular history and hence pose particular challenges.

Indeed, the situation depicted above reminds one of what was wrong with the pre-democratic education dispensation. Reading historical texts (such as Hawthorne 1990 and Kallaway 2002) one is given a disheartening view of schools in South Africa. Learners’ conduct in particular was highly problematic. Among other things, they refused to do homework, left school at any time of the day and began to reject any kind of authority (Hartshorne 1992:80). Most teachers also rejected the system. Kallaway (2002:215) maintains that “Black teachers and their organizations actively opposed what apartheid education stood for.” Inspectors from the Department of Education were required to implement and police the authoritarian management system (DoE 1996:20). This resulted in these officials being rejected by schools and as a result there was little communication between schools and district offices. Principals who stayed in the system were perceived often as part of the system and they were discredited (DoE: 18). This state of affairs led to a breakdown of management and to the collapse of teaching and learning (*ibid.* 18).

In a sense what happened in the pre-1994 schooling system can be understood if one considers the nature of the system at that time. In brief, it was a system characterised by lack of representation (of educators, parents and learners) and autocratic, top-down decision-making. Principals had no choice but to apply rigid control mechanisms if they wanted their schools to

function at all. But today, 13 years after the first democratic election and a decade after a new educational system was introduced, it is not easy to find reasons for continued resistance, apathy and the professional isolationism.

Looking for reasons only within the organisation itself would of course be short-sighted. There are contextual factors that pose huge challenges to management and leadership and chief among these is poverty. My school is situated in a resettlement area. Unemployment is high. Learners typically live with their grandparents who depend on social grants and the old-age government pensions in order to survive. Many learners are orphans because of HIV/AIDS. According to Lovell (2002:5) "AIDS is having severe social and economic consequences in Africa, and these negative effects are expected to continue for many years."

The notion of a shift to participative, consultative management and leadership approaches is thus severely challenged by both internal and external factors. The internal factors are the attitudes of educators and parents which still seem trapped in a pre-democratic mindset. The external factors are poverty and HIV/AIDS. It is against this background that this study sought to explore stakeholders' understanding of how the shift in management and leadership approaches promoted in policy documents and literature is reflected on the ground.

1.2 Goals

The goal of this research was to probe stakeholders' perceptions of the shift to democratic leadership in a school in the Eastern Cape.

1.3 Methodology

This is a qualitative study in the interpretive paradigm. What I found emerged from what my respondents told me about their situation, in other words, their interpretation of their situation.

Strydom, Fouche, Paggendoel and Schmink (1998:243) explain that “the qualitative paradigm is the method that elicits participants’ account of meaning, experience or perception.” Through looking at respondents’ descriptions and perceptions I sought to gain “understanding of [their] actions and events” (Babbie and Mouton 1998:270). These impressions were complemented by data drawn from key documents I analysed.

1.4 Clarification of terms

There are few terms that need to be clarified, chiefly because both official policy documents as well as literature are not consistent in how they use them.

The first is the term ‘democratic’ and its relationship with related terms, such as ‘participative’ and ‘consultative’. In the thesis title I have used the term ‘democratic’ taking my cue from policy documents such as the Education Human Resource Management and Development Manual (DoE 2000a: 2) which calls for “school leaders and managers to work in democratic and participatory ways”. What is meant here by the term ‘democratic’ is clarified by the addition of the term ‘participatory’, and it is almost as though policy uses these terms interchangeably. While this may be a point of debate I have simply followed this practice.

The second is the use of the terms ‘management’ and ‘leadership’. Much has been written on how these phenomena are essentially different from each other while being closely related (see, for example, Van der Mescht 1996, and Lussier & Achua 2001). This study intended to focus on leadership but retaining this focus was difficult and may have been unhelpful. My respondents frequently slipped into describing management features (those that are associated with systems, structures and maintenance) as opposed to leadership features (associated with vision, change, motivation and human interaction). In doing so they nevertheless provided valuable data. I concluded that while the focus of this study remained leadership, reference to management would make sense and be helpful; they are, after all, two sides of the same coin and few would attempt to draw a line between where one ends and the other begins.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

In Chapter Two I discuss literature relevant to my study focusing on policy and contemporary theoretical developments in the field of leadership. In Chapter Three I present and justify the research paradigm I used and discuss the method and research tools I used. I also examine the key concepts of validity and ethics as they apply to my study. In Chapter Four I present the data which I then discuss in light of relevant literature in Chapter Five. Chapter Six is the concluding chapter where I present a summary of the findings and make recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter Two

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

“Leadership means you have to be a good example, and live what you say. Only then can you persuade” (Tom Brack)

The goal of this research was to examine stakeholders’ perception of the shift to democratic leadership in a school in the Eastern Cape. To provide an appropriate background to my research and help me make sense of my findings, this chapter presents an overview of literature relevant to my study.

I begin by looking at what policy says, what I refer to as the ‘official’ position. Here I attempt to answer questions such as *How does the Department of Education in the new South Africa view leadership in schools?* And *How is the principal of a school expected to lead and manage by the National Department of Education?* I refer to various documents published by the Department of Education: the *Task Team Report* (DoE 1996), The National Education Policy Act of 1996, The South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996), the Education Human Resource Management resource file (DoE 2000a) and the Guides for School Management Teams (DoE 2000b).

Next I attempt to define leadership as seen by various scholars in the field. The intention here is to identify the key characteristics of the phenomenon in order to frame the rest of the discussion. This is followed by an account of contemporary views of leadership. Here I draw on scholars’ work as well the proceedings of an international conference that was held in Cape Town from 14 to 17 of July 2005. I single out this conference as having had a particular impact on leadership

thinking in South Africa as well as presenting a useful crystallisation of international thinking in educational leadership.

2.2 The 'official' position

After 1994 the new Department of Education shifted the direction and vision of the education system (DoE 1996:11). A number of policies and new legislation were introduced. The aim was to improve the capacity of education managers at national, provincial, district and school levels (DoE 1996). The top-down approach used during the time of apartheid was re-visioned as a school-based system of education management. Principals were now encouraged to make decisions for their schools independently of departmental control (DoE 1996:12). This implies that the principal is no longer expected to wait for the department of education to make decision for her or him. The autonomous status given to schools gave principals a chance to practise their leadership styles with minimal input from the Department of Education.

At the same time, however, the creation of various structures or organs (such as SMTs and SGBs) was meant to temper principal's autonomy and bring about a sense of democratic management. SMTs are school management *teams* consisting of the principal, deputy principal (if appointed) and Heads of Department (either appointed or acting) (DoE 2000b: 2). The principal is expected to work with the SMT and this SMT is also expected to work in a participatory manner. The Guides for School Management Teams (DoE 2000b: 2) explains: "the role of the SMT is to assist the principal with his or her management tasks and share the management tasks more widely in the school." The Education Human Resource Management and Development Manual (DoE 2000a: 2) further argues that:

The new education policy requires school leaders and managers to work in democratic and participatory ways to build relations and ensure efficient delivery.

The principal and the SMT are presented as one the inseparable entity. The principal has to facilitate and coordinate the functioning of the SMT. It is the principal who should initiate the spirit of participatory democracy. This spirit is further encouraged by the practice of inviting additional members of the staff or someone from outside the school to join SMT meetings when special skills or expertise are needed.

The SGB is driven by similar ideals. The South African Schools' Act of 1996 (DoE 2003: B-11) maintains, "The governance of every public school is vested in its governing body". The SGB consists of teachers, learners who are in the RCL (Representative Council of Learners) and parents who have their children in that particular school. The focus of the new approach to education management is the school and the community. The parents who are in the SGB represent the community. The principal has to run the school through (or with the help of) these bodies.

The *Task Team Report* also stresses the essence of democratic leadership and management in schools. It encourages decentralized leadership and inclusion of all the stakeholders when leading the school. It argues that "Decentralized leadership will be both formal and informal" (DoE 1996:40) where 'formal' refers to those people in the leadership position, like the principal and the SMT, and 'informal' will be those people who do not occupy any position of authority at school (such as other staff members) but are nevertheless able to exert leadership.

In closing this section it is interesting to note that school leadership is currently enjoying a great deal of official attention. The MEC for Education, Naledi Pandor, in her speech in the education summit held in East London in the Eastern Cape, 13 July 2005, strongly underlined the importance of the role of the principal. She argues that "a bad principal can destroy a school but it is the hard and professional work of an enthusiastic principal that can turn around a school." The MEC was cautioning the Department of Education not to focus only on the SGB but also on the principal as the leader of the school. This public and influential affirmation of the importance of leadership has raised the importance of principalship to new levels of public and academic

awareness and is probably one of the reasons why the DoE has initiated a new compulsory course for principals, and Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership.

The principalship also came under the spotlight at a recent international conference held in Cape Town from the 14th to the 17th of July 2005. I refer to papers delivered at this conference later in this chapter.

What emerges from policy and other official documents is thus a picture of leadership as participative, consultative and decentralised. Later I examine this picture in light of theoretical developments in the field. But first it is appropriate that I now examine the concept 'leadership' as it occurs in literature which will serve as a theoretical framework for this study.

2.3 Framing leadership

The concept 'leadership' has been variously defined in different contexts by different authors. Stogdill quoted by Yukl (2002:2) believes that "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who attempt to define it."

Yukl (2002:2) defines leadership as "ability of an individual to influence others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization." Crawford, Kydd and Riches (2002:25) concur with this as they define leadership as "the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal accomplishment." Udjombala similarly (2002:6) believes "Leadership is associated with influencing and motivating followers to achieve a shared vision/mission" while Hoy and Miskel (2002:374) argue that "the leader is the individual in the group given the task of directing and coordinating task-related group activities." Greenfield as quoted by Crawford *et al.* (2002:25) stresses the personal and constructivist element of leadership, maintaining that "leadership is a willful act where one person attempts to construct the social world for others." He suggests that leaders will try to commit others to the values that

they themselves believe are good. This notion is developed by Bush (2003:8) who argues that “Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations and actions of others ... They initiate change to reach existing and new goals.” Finally Broodryk (2005:41) has this to say about leadership:

Leadership is a skill and its most important objectives are to motivate and influence people towards positive attitudes, beliefs and work-related activities to reach specific objectives of the organization.

The key concepts that emerged from these definitions are *influence, motivate, direct and shape*. A leader is presented as someone who causes people to do something. If people are already doing something, s/he directs or shapes those activities to a desired direction so that the objectives of the organization are achieved. But the leader also shapes attitudes for the betterment of the organization.

In the next sections I review literature on contemporary leadership thinking particularly focusing on theories which seem to underpin the official position outlined above.

2.4 Transformational leadership

In turning to literature I need to state that this is not an attempt to trace the evolution of leadership thinking from its origins in trait theory to modern notions of distributed leadership. There are many sources to consult for a synthesis of this nature. I focus only on more contemporary theories, those that seem to be closely aligned with current official expectations. I do however need to touch on transformational leadership since it is in many ways a platform on which subsequent theories have been built.

In his book *Leadership* Burns (1978) distinguished between transformational and transactional leadership. According to Bush (2003:107) “Transactional leadership is leadership in which relationships with teachers are based upon an exchange for some valued resources.” Yukl

(2002:241) concurs with this and says “transactional leadership motivates followers by appealing to their self-interests.” He further argues, “transactional leadership may involve values, but they are values relevant to the exchange process, such as honesty, fairness, responsibility and reciprocity” (*ibid.*) It seems that this leadership approach is based on self-interest which may or may not include organizational interests. Educators try to please the principal in order to get rewards – typically promotion - in return. Some principals get trapped in this practice because they want to maintain healthy human relations. Barnett *et al.* (1999:27) argue that transactional leadership is a political phenomenon. Political leaders motivate followers by exchanging with them rewards for services rendered. They (*ibid.*) argue that this type of leadership may not be appropriate in schools since it puts people’s interests before organizational needs. It focuses on individual people rather than the whole organization.

In transformational leadership, by contrast, “leaders engage followers not only to get them to achieve something of significance but also to morally uplift them to be leaders themselves” (Burns 2004:558). Burns (*ibid.*) believes that “such leaders are more concerned with collective interest of the group, organization, and society as opposed to their own interests.” Gunter (2001:69) calls this “a unified common interest.” For Barnett *et al.* (1999:27) “transformational leadership is sensitive to organizational building, developing shared vision, distributing leadership and building school culture necessary to current restructuring efforts in schools.”

The explanations above emphasize the fact that transformational leadership takes into consideration the needs of the whole organization as opposed to individual interests. A transformational leader seeks to work for the benefit of the whole community or organization instead of certain individuals. What is noteworthy is how the notion of values has shifted in meaning.

As South Africa is in a process of educational change, leadership that is facilitative of educational change would be in a great demand. Transformational leadership is also relevant in this regard.

According to Hoy and Miskel (1996:393) transformational leaders are expected to have certain qualities:

They are expected to define the need for change, create new visions, have long-term goals and change the organization to accommodate their vision rather than work within the existing one and mentor the followers to take greater responsibilities.

Hence personal values and beliefs are the basis of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders unite followers and change their goals and beliefs in such a way that they perform better. As the result of these characteristics transformational leaders, according to Hoy and Miskel (1996:394), tend to have a powerful influence on their followers:

Followers tend to trust, admire and respect them. They become role models to their followers because they demonstrate high standard of ethical and moral conduct. Transformational leaders consider the needs of others above their own. They do not use power for personal gain. Moreover, they behave in a manner that gets group members motivated. Group members get motivated to the extent that they believe that problems of the organization can be solved.

It is possible to see how the type of 'atmosphere' depicted above can instill team spirit and optimism among group members. The principal would involve everybody in the decision making process in the school because most members would be positively inclined towards personal and organisational goals.

It appears that transformational leadership is what is needed in the new South Africa because it considers leading in ways that benefits the whole organisation and the broader community rather than certain individuals, and also attempts to empower other members. It also rests on collaboration. Empowering other people is an urgent need in South Africa because of our legacy of disempowerment, and because of the challenges of the new South Africa. Bush (2003:78) adds that "the aims of the leader and the followers coalesce to such an extent that it may be realistic to assume a harmonious relationship." This harmonious relationship can bring about good schools

with a healthy environment. Harmonious relationship between the principal and other teachers is very important in South Africa since management of change needs harmony. In my experience as principal, most teachers do not fully understand the concept of democracy. They believe that they must be consulted on *every* decision that the principal makes. Teachers are also constantly watching the principal in the hope of catching her or him doing something 'undemocratic' so that they can challenge her or him. This creates an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust, a far cry from the 'harmonious' relationships Bush has in mind.

Transformational leadership introduces the notion of values into the leadership debate, an important dimension in leadership since values determine how one behaves. This element has been further pursued in what is referred to as 'servant' leadership to which I now turn.

2.5 Servant leadership

The notion of servant leadership dates back to the 1970s and the work of Greenleaf (1977) but it has recently received renewed attention in the literature. Servant leadership essentially captures the idea of service to others, of selfless person-centred leadership.

It is generally known that values and beliefs play a role in the behaviour of any person. Even leaders, therefore, are equally affected by values when they lead. Russell (2000:76) believes that "leaders lead from their values and beliefs." These affect leadership approaches and will result in distinguishing one type of a leader from another. In servant leadership one could argue that the leader places the needs of others ahead of his or her own, and even ahead of those of the organisation; hence the drive 'to serve'. According to Russell (2000:77) a servant leader is characterised by honesty, integrity, and being forward-looking and hard working. Such a leader respects others and is of service to others. This is a leader who is concerned with "justice, personal restraint and common good" (*ibid.*). The above arguments emphasize the fact that a servant leader is not selfish. S/he puts people first while at the same time striving for organisational success. As the result s/he becomes a model in the organization. Moreover, this

builds trust among the followers. In this sense servant leadership takes human consideration beyond transformational leadership which ultimately remains focused on organisational effectiveness.

Another characteristic of a servant leader is that s/he appreciates others. As Russell (2000:79) puts it: "Servant leaders visibly appreciate, value, encourage, and care for their constituencies." This would mean an atmosphere of love and hope in the organization as well as a culture of mutual respect. Such an atmosphere would be conducive to creating what Broodryk (2005:78) refers to as "*Ubuntu* values ...values such as love, compassion, kindness, generosity, peace and harmony." An organization with such an atmosphere will be harmonious and effective. At the conference referred to earlier (DoE 2005b: 26) Desmond Tutu argued that

a person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance from knowing that he or she belongs to a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished.

Tutu's exposition of a leader or 'a person with *ubuntu*' to some extent resembles the characteristics of a transformational servant leader but, as mentioned above, the focus in servant leadership is on personal affirmation and developing community rather than organizational effectiveness.

According to Russell (1993:80) servant leaders "demonstrate respect and appreciation for others through listening" and is "committed to the growth of people." This can be achieved through teamwork. Russell (1993:80) contends that "The goal of empowerment is to create many leaders at all levels of the organization." He goes on to say "Wise leaders lead others to lead themselves." All in all the atmosphere created by a servant leader seems to be one of love, listening, respect, equality, and shared authority. In such an atmosphere teamwork is possible and leaders can multiply in that organization. Russell highlights listening as an important leadership skill, a sentiment shared by Broodryk (2005:155): "Listening attentively creates an image of a committed, caring and trustworthy person - a person with integrity." Broodryk (2005:43) believes

that leadership with qualities like "... listening, caring and creating warmth and commitment through engagement are equally ubuntu qualities." He calls this a 'shepherd' style of leadership. According to Broodryk (2005:45) this is the style of leadership we associate with the former State President of South Africa, Dr Nelson Mandela. This is, according to Broodryk a leadership which is performed in a very smooth and ease way as Dr Nelson Mandela did it. To explain this further, Broodryk compared this leadership style with a closed military style of leadership. The figure below illustrates this comparison.

Figure 1: [From Broodryk (2005: 141)]



However, values also have a self-monitoring role in leadership. Speaking at the DoE conference mentioned earlier, Christie (DoE 2005b:42) argued that the principal has to deal with "the day-to-day competing demands and ever-increasing pressures" To negotiate her or his way through such pressures, Christie maintains that the principal has to "develop the habit of 'reflexive self-monitoring'" (*ibid.*). She explains:

Establishing and maintaining procedures for maintaining procedures for management needs constant alignment with deeper values. Being able to locate one's actions in a larger frame – be it social, political, economic, spiritual - is necessary for understanding who and what we are influencing, and who and what is influencing us. The habit of touching base with deeper values in dealing with the day-to-day is an important resource for leadership.

The above statement suggests that the demands and pressures of work may cause the principal to lose leadership focus and become careless and reckless. The principal here is advised to stick to her or his values, constantly asking 'Who am I?' and 'What is morally right?'

Horst and Steenbakkers (DoE 2005b:5) expressed a similar notion:

Principals take decisions every day and therefore they are always, and finally accountable. Making choices is often difficult because as a principal, one is faced with the dilemma of conflicting values. The fact that the principal is dealing not only with the dilemma of conflicting values, but also with the people upholding those values, places the principal in an invidious position.

The atmosphere depicted above would be conducive to participative leadership. It is a family atmosphere "characterized by attitudes reflecting; human approaches, harmony, friendliness, kindness, cooperativeness, caring, trust and unconditional acceptance" (Broodryk 2005:156).

2.6 Participative leadership

The notion of leadership as 'participative' is at the heart of what is required by the Department of Education as discussed earlier. The name suggests the obvious idea that leadership should be open and inclusive rather than exclusive. Naturally this way of leading pre-supposes commitment to particular values not unlike those espoused by transformational and servant leadership.

Kouzes and Posner (2002:3), for example, maintain that “Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen.” Brundrett, Burton and Smith have the same idea as they view “leadership as a permeable process that is widely distributed throughout the school.” They further say “it is an empowering process enabling others in the school to exercise leadership” (*ibid.*). According to Sergiovanni (1992:1) “Leadership belongs to everyone ...Our role is to cultivate the leadership potential of every single employee, student and parent in our school system.” This view promotes the establishment of other decision-making platforms in schools, such as the SGB, SMT and LCR. The motivation for devolution of power is, however, more than simply providing assistance to the principal for the complex task of running a school: it is about promoting leadership and distributing responsibility.

It is, therefore, important for the principal to involve everyone in leadership, even those who are not occupying any position but do have the potential of leading and can influence decision making. Du Plooy and Westraat (2004:14) argue: “Those individuals, having no positional authority, can move around relatively free as community network builders”, representing what they refer as “the third kind of leadership in an organization.” In my experience I have noted that educators are often more easily influenced by members who are not in official leadership positions. Moreover they are likely to support what they have created. This idea is further supported by French and Bell (1995:73) that “decision making in a healthy organization is located where the information sources are, rather than a particular role or level of hierarchy.” According to Du Plooy and Westraat (2004:14) “Leadership in a good school will be made up of the powerful, the bold and the invisible, all share in the leadership of the school.” This implies that the principal has to create the space where everybody is given a chance to show her or his leadership skills for the benefit of the school. This is a way of working against what Meyer and Boninelli (2004: 10) describe as “a leadership vacuum” which charismatic leaders tend to create around themselves.

I have tried to show how the idea of participative leadership rests on values of mutual respect and a commitment to developing followers. In distributed leadership the notion of participation is taken even further.

2.7 Distributed leadership

In South Africa after 1994 there was a realisation that schools had to be transformed, hence the movement towards participative leadership identified in official documents. Schools had to be lead by vigorous and transformational leaders. But the notion of one leader transforming and charismatically leading a school may also not be ideal, because when that one leader leaves the danger exists that the school will founder. According to Timperley (2005:395):

Hopes that the transformation of schools lies with exceptional leaders have proved both unrealistic and unsustainable. The idea of leadership as distributed across multiple people and situations has proven to be more useful framework for understanding the realities of schools and how they might improve.

Timperley (2005: 395) argues for a model that subverts the “heroic leader”, a model which “involves thinking of leadership in terms of activities and interactions that are distributed across multiple people and situations”. Lakomski (2005: 63) characterizes distributed leadership as follows:

Distribution entails maximizing sources of information, data and judgment, and spreading the detrimental impact of the consequences of miscalculations and risk. Because of the pooling of expertise and sources of advice, it also affords an increased likelihood of detecting errors in judgment and more attention being accorded feedback. These things amount, in short, to an overall widening of the net of intelligence and resourcefulness.

The idea that distributing leadership also distributes responsibility and accountability – ‘spreading the detrimental impact’ - is worth noting, particularly in the South African context where accountability still seems centred on official leadership positions. This poses a significant challenge to principals nervous of letting go. But at the same time Lakomski’s vision of this kind of leadership opens up resources that were not previously recognised as factors in leadership and organizational growth. He argues that leadership involves “the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning” (Lakomski 2005: 66). In South Africa where increasingly parents and the broader community are seen as partners in education the harnessing of social and cultural resources can be a powerful strategy for leadership.

However, distributed leadership is unlikely to flourish in the absence of key values. MacBeath (2005: 353) contends, "Distributing leadership is premised on trust." Distributed leadership works on mutual trust. MacBeath (2005: 353) makes it clear that "Without mutual trust relationships and respect are compromised, and mistrust exerts a corrosive influence." MacBeath (2005: 354) identifies four levels of trust: trust at "the individual level (trustworthiness); ...interpersonal trust (reciprocal trust); at whole school level (organizational trust) and at the wider community and public level (social trust)". It is important that trust is built across all these levels.

Echoing Timperley (*op cit.*) MacBeath goes on to explain that trust goes with accountability as he asserts "While working to generate trust heads also have to hold staff to account through performance monitoring..." (*ibid.*). This implies a sense of readiness on the part of those who accept leadership. They must want to do it. They must not be forced to do it. Moreover, the other members must also accept it. MacBeath (2005: 353) stresses that "distribution also implies teachers' mutual acceptance by staff of one another's leadership potential... others must accept the leadership capabilities of others."

The position outlined above contrasts starkly with traditional leadership notions of command and control and poses a strong challenge to educational leaders in South Africa. Distributed leadership extends the notion of participation, so that leadership becomes a way of promoting humanity and community rather than merely involving others in accomplishing tasks. It seems also to suggest more than what is commonly thought of as delegation, as tasks are not merely handed out to likely followers. Rather, distributed leadership implies a moral readiness to take on tasks and also accept accountability. MacBeath (2005: 355) puts it "Decision-making by consensus distributes that right to others ..."

It follows that an organisation that adopts some form of shared or distributed leadership is likely to encourage and enable learning among its members. Since teaching and learning are at the core

of a school's activities it is incumbent upon leadership to bring about constant learning *about* teaching and learning. This is referred to as instructional leadership. I frame the following section on instructional leadership within the context of a learning organisation.

2.8 Leadership and the learning organisation

An instructional leader is involved in the design, development and delivery of the curriculum of the school. This means helping the school to achieve its goals by making sure that there is effective teaching and learning in the classroom (DoE 2001: B-3).

The fact that there is 'official' reference to instructional leadership as noted above is a significant indicator of how teaching and learning are viewed by the DoE. In light of the continued under-performance of so many schools in South Africa this is hardly surprising. Schools are judged by their grade 12 results. In presenting this overview I draw heavily on the influential work of Blase and Blase (1996: 133) who frame the notion of instructional leadership as 'curriculum conversation' and 'collaborative learning'. I then move on to explain how these articulate with the learning organisation.

2.8.1 Curriculum conversation

Blase and Blase (1996:133) believe that "effective principals ... talk with the teachers." The principal has to know what is taking place in the classroom. Moreover the principal has to work with and through the SMT. Policy expects all educators including the SMT to be assessed through the integrated quality management system (IQMS), a system designed by the Department of Education to assess the performance of teachers. During this process the HOD's are expected to visit educators in their classrooms which should lead to 'curriculum conversation'.

The ultimate aim of these conversations is to identify educators' weak and strong points. Being aware of these, educators can develop in the necessary areas. Blase and Blase (1996:133) suggest that "this conversation includes making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling, asking advice and giving praise." These talks are therefore more developmental than judgmental. Suggestions can be made after the HOD has interacted with the educator. The educator can also suggest in which areas s/he needs to be developed. The interaction becomes healthier when it is done both formally and informally in day-to-day activities. The principal in turn interacts with the HOD's. This interaction is done on a friendly and developmental basis. This approach would encourage the kind of interaction discussed earlier where "to be a leader, one has to be a friend" (Kouzes and Posner 2002:330). During these talks, informally and formally, the principal can make purposeful and non-threatening suggestions.

The principal also needs to talk to learners. S/he has to understand learners' attitudes to school activities including teaching and learning. This means s/he also needs to observe classroom activities which will enable him or her to give feedback to teachers and learners. This relationship of the principal with the teachers and learners builds confidence in both teachers and learners.

An old saying maintains that a leader has to be a good example. The principal, therefore, as an instructional leader has to be exemplary. Blase and Blase (1996:133) contend that "effective instructional leaders demonstrate teaching techniques in the classroom". This is perhaps an idealistic notion, especially in the current climate in South Africa. Classroom observation is regarded with suspicion by teachers and their unions and principals often see their roles purely as administrators. But it is clear that positive curriculum conversations can create an excellent principal-educator rapport. The principal can even encourage educators to study further so as to develop their skills and to go to in-service training to learn new things (*ibid*: 133). In my experience as a teacher, I realized that before 1994 the relationship between the principal and teachers was often not conducive to this kind of leadership; some principals were too authoritarian and were viewed as part of the apartheid education system. Even learners were not regarded as people who could contribute to the running of the school.

2.8.2 Collaborative learning

Within the context of these conversations it is likely that collaborative learning will occur. By 'collaborative learning' Blase and Blase (1996:135) mean learning about learning, about the curriculum and how it is to be delivered. They argue that "principals as instructional leaders ... support the redesign of programs". This suggests a curriculum leadership role for the principal, again a role that may seem idealistic in a context where headship is often about power struggles and trying to make schools function 'normally'.

Nevertheless, it is true that schools are now organized into clusters in the Eastern Cape. There is school moderation and cluster moderation. In cluster moderation, teachers of the neighbouring schools who teach the same learning areas meet to discuss their programmes and a subject adviser acts as a moderator. Educators coach and advise each another on how best they can approach their learning areas in these clusters. The clusters have cluster leaders who teach the same subject, who co-ordinates the activities of the cluster. In this way teachers can learn from each other collaboratively. An arrangement like this would work well at school level too, where the principal would be the leader. Educators are still grappling curriculum changes, from OBE (Outcome Based Education) to the NCS (National Curriculum Statement). These changes pose huge challenges for teachers and require collaborative learning in order to master new teaching and learning approaches.

2.8.3 The school as a learning organisation

He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils; for time is the greatest innovator (Moloi 2005:1).

Moloi's comment above highlights the importance of continuous learning in a school organization. Through 'curriculum conversations' and 'collaborative learning' schools can respond to curriculum challenges, and under the instructional leadership of the principal schools

can develop their capacity to deal with the core business of teaching and learning. This in itself would be a sound foundation for becoming a learning organisation.

The notion of a learning organisation has become an area of interest to scholars and practitioners in recent years. For some the emphasis is on teaching and learning. Moloï (2005:1) argues that:

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

The focus here is on curriculum. For others the learning in a learning organisation is broader and embraces organizational development. Smith (2003:12), for example, defines a learning organization as:

An organization that systematically, frequently and critically asks itself “how are things going?”, “how can we do better?” It is about learning from one’s experience rather than [only] from lectures; it is said that experience is the best teacher.

Asking critical questions leads to a kind of action research such as is suggested by the idea of curriculum conversations where teachers try to find out how to improve the status quo.

Voulalas (2004:196) has a similar view and defines a learning organization as “an organization which constantly learns from its past and present experiences and contemplates for the future”. He further maintains: “it consciously uses these discoveries to continuously change and adapt in order to improve.” Reference to the need to be learning organisations is also found in the Task Team Report (DoE 1996:31): “learning organizations make change part of their ethos and support

individual and collective learning as part of their mission". The emphasis here is on the capacity of the whole organization to learn, adapt and grow in its interaction with its environment.

Within this broader context the concept of the learning organisation seems to be framed within organisation development (OD). Davidoff *et al.* (1994:8) emphasize this by referring to schools as "living organizations". A school as a living organization is like an organism continually growing. To further explain this, they quote Dalin and Rust as maintaining that the essential purpose of organization development:

is to improve the health and functioning of school organizations. Organization Development is holistic or systematic in that it concentrates on the organization more than on the isolated individual or practice.

The above explanation highlights the fact that learning is continuous, and the process holistic. This implies that the organization has to keep on learning and develop itself. In order for a school to improve its results every year, everybody in it has to understand the concept that a school is a learning organization. Senge (1994:13) puts it more emphatically: "A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it." The idea of continuity in learning is emphasized by all of these authors. To me this implies that learning never stops.

In the context of massive and far-reaching change it seems important that schools adopt a learning organisation approach. However, Voulalas (2004:187) warns that "for a school to be a learning organization it has to adopt more flexible administrative structure and decision making processes", and further that "It has to strengthen its connection with the environment". These expectations pose significant challenges for South African schools. The notion of flexible decision-making structures is a new concept which may develop as schools work with the recently formed SMTs, SGBs and LCRs. My understanding, however, is that many principals learned their role under a system where hierarchy and direct accountability were essential features. Change may be difficult for them. In terms of connecting to the environment schools

have only recently begun to embrace the role of the SGB and here too the challenges are significant as research has found (Niitembu 2006).

Another challenge is individualism. Voulalas (*ibid.*: 187) stresses that in a learning organisation “there is a shift from individual learning to collective learning involving all the stakeholders, teachers, students and local community”. Such a culture “emerges where people are more willing to learn from each other and from their own experiences” (*ibid.*). Senge (1994:10) has a similar view:

It is no longer sufficient to have one person learning for the organization. It's just not possible any longer to “figure it out” from the top, and have everyone else following the orders of the “grand strategist.”

This approach to learning advocated by Senge (1994) and Voulalas (2004) is in line with the type of leadership that is currently needed in South Africa (DoE 2000), (DoE 2001), (DoE 1996). Voulalas' (2004) reference to more flexible administrative structures suggests a flat hierarchy and more decentralized decision-making processes which is also suggested by the Task Team Report.

The salient features of a learning organization that emerge are: collaboration among leaders and staff, commitment, motivation, ability to adapt to new situations, evaluation, availability of resources, community involvement, mutual support among members, shared celebration of success, staff renewal for improvement of the human resources of the organization, staff selection process and the in-service education (Voulalas 2004.:198). Many of these features are exactly what the DoE is trying to advocate, as discussed earlier. In South Africa, research on effective schools also articulates with learning organisation characteristics. Thurlow *et al.* (2003:119) describe an effective school as a school with:

shared vision and goals; professional leadership which is firm and purposeful with a participative approach; an orderly learning and attractive working environment; maximization of teaching and learning time; school-based staff development; high expectations all round; high pupil self-esteem; purposeful teaching, home-school partnership and parental involvement.

The above characteristics could be visible when a school is continuously learning, improving and developing. The idea of effective schools is also highlighted by Levin and Lockheed (1993:6) as having some of the following features:

Maximized learning time; instructional leadership; staff stability; parental involvement; schoolwide staff development; schoolwide recognition of academic success; district support; collaborative planning; collegial relationships; sense of community; clear goals and high expectations; order and discipline, consistency of school values and pupil acceptance of school norms.

The above explanations imply that when everybody understands a school as a learning organization, most schools will be effective.

In conclusion, according to Blase and Blase (1996:137,138) principals who are practising instructional leadership should build “a school culture of individual and shared critical examination for instructional improvement”.

In the discourse on the learning organisation and also on leadership, there is constant reference to organisation culture. It seems appropriate to my research question to clarify what scholars mean when they refer to culture in this way. Since my research interest is in finding out whether and to what extent any shifts in leadership have taken place it is likely that such changes will also be reflected in the school culture.

2.9 Organisation culture

Literature seems to emphasise that an organisation's culture is built on values. Thurlow, Bush and Coleman (2003:89) assert that "culture emanates from the values and beliefs of members of organisation." They go on to explain that these individual beliefs and values coalesce and form up shared values that create organisational culture. These shared values become common practice of an organisation. Hoy and Miskel (1996:129) similarly define organisational culture as "shared orientations, pattern of beliefs that hold the unit together and give a distinctive identity." In a school context all the role-players - teachers, including the principal, learners and parents – thus contribute to and are also 'glued together' by their shared norms which become the (often unwritten) rules of that particular school. These rules govern the way members behave, and values can be seen as "conscious expressions of what organizations stand for" (Deal and Peterson 1999:26). There is, in other words, a 'practical' element in values. How this may play out in a school context is one the questions this study seeks to answer. In particular this study is interested in what role the principal plays in shaping organisation culture.

There is support for the idea that principals play a significant role in establishing and shaping culture. Schein (1992:2) is of the opinion that organisational cultures are created in part by leaders. The influence of the principal in the culture of the school was also strongly highlighted in Smith's (1995) study of teachers of diverse race and culture working in the same high school in South Africa. This study shows that the founding principal was the key figure in the creation of vision, mission and culture of the school. Smith maintains that "the teachers' social organization cannot be understood apart from the person and the role of the founding principal" (*ibid.*: 77). Whereas Smith (1995) stressed social organisation, Sergiovanni and Corbally (1984:119) argue that "The task of leaders is to create the moral order that binds them and the people around them." They argue from the position that leadership is essentially a moral act, a point of view that aligns strongly with much of the contemporary leadership literature referred to earlier in which values take centre stage.

It seems clear from the literature that the personal values of leaders influence their decision-making and leadership generally. These values and actions shape organisation culture which becomes the shared orientation of organisation members. This argument reveals that the principal as the moral leader has to make choices for the school. Such choices have to be morally sound. If the school is imagined as a “community” rather than “organisation”, as Sergiovanni (1992:41) has suggested, the values, sentiments, beliefs and norms of the leader are shared and become community values. It is these ‘school’ values – rather than rules and top-down control – that guide the behaviour of teachers and give meaning to school community life (*ibid.*). In fact, “community norms provide the school with a *substitute* for direct leadership” (*ibid.*).

This chapter has engaged with contemporary views on leadership, both as depicted in official documents as well as literature. Several currently influential trends in leadership thinking were discussed and linked with the associated discourses of the learning organisation and organisation culture.

The next chapter presents the methodology in terms of its orientation and design.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the research paradigm that I adopted for this study. The specific method and its benefits are also discussed. I then describe my sample, my research site, my data collecting tools and data analysis. Related to these, I then engage with the ethical issues with regard to the research. Lastly, I give a critical evaluation of my methodology by giving its potential limitations.

3.2 The research orientation

As mentioned in Chapter one this study set out to examine school stakeholders' perceptions of the shift to democratic leadership in a school in the Eastern Cape. In order to make sense of their perceptions I used an interpretive/qualitative research approach. According to Merriam (2001:6) "qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context." I was interested in understanding what school members believed was happening in terms of the leadership of the school, what meaning they made of their experience and also their description of the situation. I was looking for "in-depth description and understanding of actions and events" (Babbie and Mouton 1998: 270). I set out to understand their situation through their eyes (Babbie and Mouton 1998: 271).

3.3 Case study

The case study is generally regarded as a study in which the researcher "focuses on a particular situation, event or phenomenon and this makes it a good design for practical ... situations, and

occurrences of everyday practice, that is, for applied or real world research” (Winegardner (2001:5). Merriam (in Winegardner *ibid.*) regards it as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit.” In this research I planned to investigate one instance of a particular manifestation of leadership occurring ‘naturally’ within its real-world context.

One of the purposes of the case study is to find out what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions, and to assess phenomena in a new light (Winegardner 2001:7). Stake (1995:8) asserts “in a case study we take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it does.” The emphasis is on understanding the case itself.

For these reasons the case study seemed an appropriate method to employ.

3.4 Sampling

Strydom *et al.* (1998:191) define a sample as “a small portion of the total set of objectives, events or persons which together comprise the subject of our study”. In my study I chose one school and from that school I selected the principal, the HOD, one post level 1 educator, two learners from the RCL (Representative Council of Learners) and the SGB chairperson.

Sampling was both purposive and convenient. The school I selected has a reputation in the district as a sound academic school, consistently producing very good examination results. I chose this school because I needed a case which might exhibit a good example of the phenomenon I was interested in. A dysfunctional or under-performing school is not likely to reveal examples of good leadership practice. I also chose the school because it is also close to where I live and work this would save money and time, since I planned to pay it several visits.

I had six respondents. I selected the principal because he co-ordinates the activities of the school and, as literature suggests, may be very instrumental in establishing the school's leadership culture and practice. The HOD is part of the SMT and I believed he would understand the decision-making processes of the school. The post level 1 educator was included to establish the extent of decentralization in decision making. The RCL member and the parent would, I thought, be in a position to tell me about the involvement of learners and parents in the decision-making of the school. This may seem like a small sample but, following Strydom *et al.* (1998:191), I felt the sample size was "feasible" for a small scale study. Indeed, Strydom *et al.* (1998:191) further argue that "the use of samples may result in more accurate information than might have been obtained from the entire population..." This is because with a small sample using interpretive techniques one is able to probe for meaning in a way that is not possible with large-scale survey work.

3.5 Data collection

I used two data collection tools: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. This decision was promoted by the need to obtain robust data. While the subject of my enquiry was people's perceptions and understanding I felt it would strengthen my findings if I supplemented these impressions with 'harder' data from documents. This enabled a degree of triangulation.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

To get information from my respondents I conducted interviews. According to Benny and Hughes (in Taylor and Bogdan 1998:87) "the interview is the favored digging tool of social researchers." Cohen *et al.* (2001:267) explain: "Interviews enable participants... to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view." These were clear advantages for me in this project.

My interview schedule was semi-structured with open-ended questions (see Chapter Four). According to May (2001:123) this “enables the interviewer to have more latitude to probe the answers and thus enter into dialogue with the interviewee”. My interviews were conversational and I had opportunities to probe my respondents. My respondents had a chance to talk freely about how the principal was leading the school. In this I tried to achieve the “conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest” that Kvale (1996:125) refers to.

My interview schedule (see Appendix A) guided me to focus on relevant issues. It helped to make the data-collection systematic. In spite of this I found, upon scrutinizing my data more critically, that I had missed opportunities for probing and pressing for ‘solid’ answers. I had also failed to gain clarity on a few issues, and hence decided to re-interview all the respondents. Fortunately they were happy to oblige, and the data have hopefully gained in richness. The follow-up questions I used for the second round of interviews appear as Appendix B.

I interviewed my respondents in different places. I interviewed the principal, the HOD and the educator at their homes. In my view that allowed more time for conversation as we were relaxing in their sitting rooms. At school I suspect we could have been interrupted. May (2003:225) describes interviews as “some form of conversation with a purpose” and in arranging the time – Sunday afternoons - and place I was aiming to achieve ‘conversation’ because they were comfortable and at ease. The interview with the learners was at school, in the principal’s office. There were a few disturbances as the principal did enter his office several times while the interview was on but these did not interrupt the flow of conversation unduly. I interviewed the SGB parent at her place of work in her office during her lunch time. There were no disturbances as other staff members were on lunch.

I recorded the interviews on a cassette recorder as manual recording on a notebook would slow down the session. It would be difficult to record lengthy responses manually since the respondents were responding to open-ended questions. Moreover, recording information provides a durable record and, Seidman (1991:87) argues, “if something is not clear in a transcript, the

researchers can return to the tape recorder and check for accuracy". Patton (1991: 348) also reflects on this in his argument that "tape recorders do not 'tune out' conversations; change what has been said because of interpretation or record words more slowly than they are spoken." These two authors show the increased accuracy of data collection when tape recorded. Another advantage as I mentioned earlier was that it gave me time to listen attentively to my respondents and made my interview session more conversational. Patton's (1991:348) argument supports this idea: "the use of a tape recorder permits the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee." I had time to listen uninterrupted. My respondents were comfortable with the idea of being recorded. In fact, they were so helpful that they also wanted to make sure whether the tape recorder was not faulty by asking me to test it before leaving.

I transcribed the data verbatim in a notebook. Researchers seem to support the idea of the researcher doing his or her own transcription, even though, as McFarlane (2000:67) maintains, "transcribing tape recorded interviews is a long tedious exercise" he nevertheless advises it because "this increases the researcher's familiarity with the data." Strydom *et al.* (1998:342), concur that "repetitive reading through the data enables the researcher to become intimately familiar with the data." Having transcribed the interviews I then read through each transcript repeatedly so as to get their general feeling about each question. I then classified the information into various categories and themes (Cohen *et al.* 2003: 282).

3.5.2 Document analysis

My second data collecting tool was document analysis. In order to get a deeper understanding of how things are done at this school I felt that I needed to look at some of the key documents of the school. These were staff minute books, SMT minute books, SGB minute books, the school policy, the school report and the file of the HOD who is responsible also for Life Orientation. The Life Orientation file gave me data on two special committees that the school had formed. These helped me to obtain factual information and the school report provided me with the school's historical background. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:704) are of the opinion that written texts give historical insight and also provide a truer indication of original meanings than do other

types of evidence. These authors go on to say “Text can be used alongside other forms of evidence so that the particular biases of each can be understood and compared” (*ibid.*).

My intention in studying these documents was to obtain concrete evidence of how the school was structured to enable its management and leadership style. As is discussed later, respondents frequently referred to committees the school had established. I hoped these documents would enable me to track the history and nature of some of these committees as I thought this would help to answer my research question. As it turned out the documents were a rich source of data, frequently confirming and enriching interview data.

I was fortunate in being granted free and open access to all of these documents, which eased my task enormously. Indeed, in all my dealings with the school I was convinced that they were excited by my research and keen to help.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:372) believe that “because the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them.” Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004:73) concur with this: “...respondents must be fully informed about research in which the interview is going to be used.” Before starting my research I asked my respondents’ permission. I explained the aim of my research. I also asked permission to use a tape recorder. I assured them that their names would not be mentioned. Dane (1990:51) stresses the importance of confidentiality when doing research:

Confidentiality exists when only the researchers are aware of the participants’ identities and have promised not to reveal those identities to other. Obtaining participants’ names during data collection and then destroying the record of their names upon completion of the project is one way to maintain confidentiality.

I also heeded Dane's (1990:46) warning that it is "part of a researcher's responsibility ...to represent him or herself accurately". I took the trouble to introduce myself clearly to the respondents and explained what I was investigating and why. My respondents were warmly willing to participate and were very supportive during the process, even though I had to interview them a second time.

3.7 Validity

According to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* the term 'valid' means *based on truth, or reason, able to be accepted*. I had to make sure that my research findings would be 'able to be accepted', and thus I followed a systematic approach in order to ensure validity. Maxwell (1996: 6) maintains that validity is addressed through all of the research design steps, not just data analysis, that is, in sampling, data collection and analysis. As explained earlier, I used an appropriate sample, "one which is representative, not too small or too large" Cohen *et al.* 2003 (115). My sample included at least one representative of the different stakeholder groups. My data collection method also addressed the threat to validity. I allowed my respondents to be open, free and honest by asking open-ended questions. Cohen *et al.* (2003:255) stressed this idea: "... an open-ended question can catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty..." Appropriate interviewing can also result in a depth and richness in the data.

Importantly, I also chose to study documents for reasons discussed earlier. In terms of validity, I believe the data obtained from documents played a significant role on strengthening my findings.

In the next chapter I present the data.

Chapter Four

Data presentation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the data collected from interviews and documents. I begin by giving a brief historical sketch of the school in order to place the case study into a context. I then move onto presenting the data in categories suggested by repeated readings in light of my research question.

4.1.1 Brief background of the research site

The school is a previously disadvantaged school situated in a semi-urban area in the Eastern Cape. It was founded in 1987 and at first shared the facilities of a neighbouring junior secondary school. These two schools shared the buildings, staff room and principal's office though they had different meetings, uniform and time table. The two principals also shared the responsibilities. The school moved to its own buildings in 1988 with eleven teachers including the principal. The curriculum comprised humanities and natural sciences. Currently the school has 22 teachers including the principal. The SMT consists of the Deputy Principal and three HOD's. The curriculum comprises the Natural Sciences, Commerce and Service Subjects, i.e. Hotel Keeping and Tourism. There are 756 learners. With only 13 classrooms and 22 teachers, class sizes range from 65 to 70 learners per class.

According to the plan of the school, there is only one office which was to be the principal's office but due to lack of accommodation the store room was changed into an office and it is shared by the principal and one HOD. The second HOD shares her office the office intended for the principal) with the administrative assistant, while the third HOD uses his car as an office. In a letter written by the SGB to the Department of Education I consulted I learned that, apart from

the above mentioned shortages of accommodation, the school does not have science and computer laboratories. There are also no playing grounds for learners.

The HOD explained that the community in this area is very poor. Many parents are domestic workers and others depend on government grants and old age pension. Hence parental involvement in school affairs is an on-going challenge, and the school constantly needs to find ways of assisting parents financially.

The grade 12 results in terms of pass rates have been consistently outstanding:

2003	85%
2004	87%
2005	80%
2006	94%

With regard to extra-curricular activities, the school has excelled in music. The school choir has repeatedly been the national champions. The football team also won Provincial Championships in the Love Life Games in 2005. The school is generally regarded as the top performer in the region.

An important school document to which I refer in this chapter is the school's *Mission Statement, Vision and Core Values*, a document developed jointly by all stakeholders. The mission statement, vision and core values are worth capturing here to provide a richer sense of the school:

MISSION STATEMENT:

The school seeks to achieve high academic excellence by co-operating with all the stakeholders, i.e. learners and parents.

- To educate the learners and give them a good quality education so that they may compete well in the global world.
- To educate the learners for life-long learning and sustainable development.
- To educate learners to be able to cope with their environment.
- To equip learners with skills to plough back to their community, socially and economically.

VISION:

- We seek to attain high levels of effectiveness and efficiency
- We seek to build a school which will provide good future citizens
- We seek to have a self-sufficient and self-reliant school

CORE VALUES:

We believe in:

- Creating a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning
- Honesty, transparency, flexibility and personal commitment to quality
- Respecting the rights, values and dignity of others in a democratic community which upholds a code of decency, honour and self-respect
- Nurturing the joy of learning and putting an emphasis on the value of academic activities
- Solid accountability and a sense of national pride

- Promote equality irrespective of race, creed, religion, culture, sex, social status or physical ability

The rest of the document consists mostly of rules and regulations governing all aspects of school life, including this interesting ‘rule’ under staff meetings: “Educators should as much as possible be actively involved in the debates that ensue”.

I now move on to presenting the data.

4.2 The data

The following are the categories I created to present the data emerging from the interviews and the documents:

4.2.1 The principal’s leadership role

4.2.2 Leadership structures

4.2.2.1 Official external structures

4.2.2.2 Internal structures

4.2.3 The school’s organisational culture

4.2.4 Leadership challenges

Respondents are identified by their positions: Principal, HOD, Educator, Parent, and Learner 1 and 2. Documents consist mostly of meetings of minutes and are identified by the name of the body (SMT, SGB, LCR and various other committees) as well as the date (e.g. 06/06/05) on which the meetings took place.

The chapter closes with a summary.

4.2.1 The principal's leadership role/style

Since the principal had been occupying the post of a principal for some time – pre-and post-1994 – I was interested in whether he felt there had been shifts in his leadership style. It emerged, however, that his leadership style had never been very rigid and authoritative. He described himself as “more democratic” though there was “less consultation”. The HOD confirmed that “the principal was in tune with the present dispensation”. This idea was also echoed by the educator as he said “The principal was partly democratic and partly bureaucratic.” ‘Bureaucratic’ used in this sense suggests authoritarianism, a command and control approach to leadership. The fact that there had been an element of this in his leadership seemed unproblematic because it was accepted by everyone – including the principal – that heads should “run the school alone”. The perception of all the stakeholders was that the principal should be a “heroic” leader.

This principal, however, is depicted as participative and ‘democratic’ in his leadership. In the first interview he explained that his approach was influenced “by legislation”, suggesting that it was officially expected of school heads to lead in this way. But during the follow-up interview it emerged that the principal is democratic by nature: “It is not only because of legislation. But the best style is situational.” He went on to say “But mostly you allow them [other stakeholders] as much as possible to participate because it is their welfare”. This was confirmed by all respondents. The HOD put it: “He allows everybody to make contributions” and the educator confirmed: “Our principal is a democratic one. He always consults.” The principal’s rationale for this kind of leadership pointed to more than mere compliance. He argued that “They spend most of their time at school. Then you must allow the debate to flow freely”. The principal was emphasising the importance of participatory democracy, not only because of legislation but because he saw the school as a second ‘home’ where members needed to feel needed: he needed to provide a kind of ‘spiritual’ nourishment to people.

It is interesting to note that the principal saw his role as encouraging debate among the staff. This notion is even captured in the school policy document as reported above. The school policy also states that staff meetings are held to promote this and to maximise tuition time such meetings are not to hinder tuition as the policy explains: "Staff meetings must, as much as possible be at times which will not hinder tuition at school". This document goes on to emphasise the importance of tuition when it further says "Choral practice sessions to be conducted after tuition". In this sense the principal understood his role as being coherent with the policy.

Another feature of his approach is visible in the distribution of duties and responsibilities. This is done at staff meetings. The principal said "We debate issues and we come up with recommendations together". The educator confirmed this: "It becomes the product of discussion in the staff meeting that has been convened. It starts by volunteering and then people are elected to serve in such committees."

The principal also recognises the official and the internal structures of management. He involves them in the decision-making of the school. The principal explained "We are given various structures of governance which are in place." He acknowledged the existence and importance of structures (the SMT, SGB and RCL). The principal had overseen the establishment of these management structures. Documents I consulted confirmed the activities of these bodies. SMT Minutes (29 August 2005) showed that policies were being developed in the SMT meeting. Apart from official structures the principal was also leading through structures that were formed internally: "There are structures in place, like committees. We delegate some of the responsibilities to those committees, like for example the sport committee, music committee, culture, a number of them." Staff Meeting Minutes (15/02/05) confirmed that committees had been elected in the staff meeting. The following committees were elected: disciplinary, entertainment, sport, music, culture, cleaning, uniform, site, athletics, catering, finance, and indigenous games.

What needs to be emphasised is that that these structures were not just there, they were functional, and the principal was leading through them. Staff Meeting minutes depict an atmosphere of involvement and 'busi-ness'. In the Staff Meeting on 18 March 2005 a farewell function of a teacher was referred to the entertainment committee. In Staff Meeting 18/03/05 a teacher reported on behalf of the SGB. In Staff Meeting 14/02/05 teachers were reporting on the launch of the HAC (Health Advisory Committee) and in Staff Meeting 25/10/05 teachers gave a progress report on prize-giving arrangements. There are reports on a donation in the form of money from FNB (Staff Meeting 07/06/05, a motivational talk by the principal, asking staff to work for the success of the school and to make sacrifices (17/01/06), and another such talk (09/05/06). These minutes paint a picture of participation and delegation, as well as the principal's readiness to take on the role of motivating teachers to work harder.

The data further suggest that the principal leads by example. The principal's punctuality, his strong work ethic and his readiness to implement policies imply that the principal was doing what he expected other educators and learners to do. The principal explained: "I lead by example in terms of punctuality, in terms of doing the work, in terms of leading them through policies". The parent also saw the principal as being exemplary: "He teaches...he is the light of the school". Learners also recognised the fact that the principal is exemplary and referred to him as a "role model".

Participative leadership rests on the ability to really 'hear' what others are saying, and here the principal seemed to excel. The parent experienced him as a good listener. The skill of listening was also highlighted by the educator who explained that "When a decision has been made and needs to be reviewed he does that willingly". This educator emphasised this by citing a case where a parent wanted her child to be reimbursed for training shoes he lost in a school match. The SMT agreed, but this educator thought that it was the wrong decision. He managed to convince the principal that this would set a dangerous precedent and explained: "Then we had to reverse the decision and ultimately the SMT and the principal realised that he had made the wrong decision."

As touched on earlier, the principal emerged as one who cares about the welfare of other people. One of the learners said: “He addresses personal problems of learners.” This quality was also discernible in the principal’s willingness to see other people develop. The HOD noted: “He allows that space for everybody to develop his outmost [*sic*] potential” and went on “...even when there are posts. He comes with the bulletin and allows us to apply”.

The principal is also a good communicator. It was revealed that he kept the SGB informed: The parent said: “He reports about the state of the school. He tells us the strong and the weak teachers.”

Finally, the principal’s leadership embraces the need to change and keep up with a changing environment. The curriculum currently followed by the school is more diversified than the original curriculum, and the implementation of subject such as Travel and Tourism are a direct result of his reading of the needs of learners and the country’s economic needs. Minutes of a Staff Meeting (18/03/05) confirm the introduction of Travel and Tourism in recent years, and an excursion to Port St Johns.

The principal’s attempts to acquire ICT facilities for the school show a similar recognition of the need to grow. In the interview the principal referred to his efforts to secure computer facilities and additional buildings. One of the most significant documents I studied was a letter to the MEC in Zwelitsha. After giving a list of the school’s impressive achievements the letter aligns itself with national needs:

This and many other initiatives that we are embarking on as a school seek to address the government’s call for intervention programmes borne from our constitution that are aimed at improving the lives and conditions of our people, especially our future leaders”.

In identifying with expressed national needs the letter shows a remarkable level of awareness, as well as good marketing skills. It is significant, I think, that a secondary school in a semi-urban area of the Eastern Cape sees itself as playing an important role in building a nation. Finally, the letter asks for a “a state of the art school” in terms of ICT facilities. The letter is signed by a team: The Principal, the SMT, and SGB, the educators and the student body. I was not told of the outcome of this request. Other respondents also showed awareness of the need to develop and improve. The educator, for example, mentioned that they wanted to use a building of a former technical college that was no longer in use but that they had not been granted permission. The principal reported that he often ‘borrowed’ good ideas he saw at other schools. In all the school gave the impression of being on the look-out for opportunities to improve and grow, bearing out the principal’s cryptic closing comment: “We are on our toes.”

4.2.2 Leadership structures

I have already mentioned the existence of both the official and the internal leadership structures in the school, that is, the SMT, SGB, RCL and the different committees. Now I present the data that reveals the functionality of these structures.

4.2.2.1 Official structures

The data confirm the existence and the functionality of the SMT, SGB and the RCL in the school. The principal commented on shifts in perceptions of how schools were managed:

Our governance is such that you allow and recognise the existence of these structures, e.g. there is a difference between the present Learner Representative Council and the old prefect system. Those prefects were more messengers than these RCLs. You have to sit down and listen; otherwise if you are not listening to these structures, the tendency is that they disassociate themselves from you.

He went further to explain how these structures operate:

In our school each entity is operating differently, but then in the SGB it is where all of them come together because there are teachers, parents, and learners. It is where they find common ground. After that learners go to report to learners and teachers go to teachers and parents to parents.

The SMT minute book (06/10/05) reveals that the SMT played a significant role in the running of the school. The SMT plans the agenda for staff meetings. The functionality of the SGB is evidenced by the fact that the case of a teacher farewell was referred to the SGB (Staff Meeting 26/03/06) to get its opinion. There are various activities that are referred to the SGB which shows that it is functional. The principal also explained:

If there is a thorny issue in terms of academics, for example, teachers are complaining about a particular issue. Let me make an example about the school fees. The SGB has to take that upon them and call those parents who don't pay, visit their homes, finding out and exempting those are supposed to be exempted from paying school fees, upon judging the conditions of their homes.

In an SGB meeting (01/03/05) a report was made about school fees, results and choir achievements. The SGB also suggested a date for a parents' meeting at the same meeting. Other issues discussed by the SGB include teacher absenteeism (13/02/06) and welcoming new teachers (26/05/05). The SGB also participates in various activities and functions of school. The parent explained:

We were highly involved when the policy of the school was made. Also in other activities like the prize-giving, celebrations at school ... we also recommend the employment of a teacher. Even when we don't want a teacher because of his/her bad behaviour.

The SGB was usually highly involved in the farewell of grade 12. The educator explained "Parents felt that they should be hands on and cook for this activity." The study also confirmed

that the SGB authorised how money should be used at school. The principal explained: "So we use money for sport because it has been authorised by the SGB. Even if it has to be increased, we need to go to the SGB and then the SGB has to give the go ahead as to how much must we raise and so on." He saw the SGB as "the highest decision making body in terms of the finance - but then we are using the finances under the instruction of the SGB. We go back and account, e.g. the school fees is utilized to buy stationary, paper but all of those things are under the auspices of the SGB."

Though the RCL seemed not to have had meetings it appeared that it does exist and it is functional. The RCL participates in controlling other learners. The learners explained their contribution as they mentioned: "Fighting in class, drugs, and learners with dirty uniform. We call police to search for drugs and weapons." They participate in making decisions. They explained: "For example we came with the idea of matric jacket. Miss X took it upon herself and handled it."

However, learners also felt that sometimes they were not involved in decision making. Learner 2 explained:

I think there are sometimes, some school activities ...sometimes teachers decide on their own and sometimes they involve us. But I think they decide for us, sometimes we don't take things serious [*sic*] and we become irresponsible for other things. That has given us no problems.

Perhaps the fact that the RCL had had no meetings is further evidence that they "don't take things serious".

Apart from these official structures there are also internal structures that the principal is using. These are called committees. I now discuss them.

4.2.2.2 Internal structures

Through his participative leadership approach the principal also leads through different internally organized structures. The Staff meeting of 15/02/05 recorded the election of several committees for 2005. The principal explained:

There are structures in place, like committees. We delegate some of the responsibilities to those committees, like for example there is sport committee, music committee, culture, a number of them.

To confirm their functionality the principal explained how they worked:

They come up with their initiatives and they are accountable to the SMT. They have got their own roles in terms of their initiatives, creations and their innovations. As long as you have given them the role and they operate but knowing that they are answerable to the bigger staff as well.

As the respondents further explained each committee works separately and reports to the SMT and the staff about its activity for approval. The HOD explained:

Our committee has got four to five people. Each of us in that committee has got a role e.g. PRO, somebody who is going to market the activity, recorder somebody who is recording minutes. For example if we are going to have an activity at school, like for instance, today we have a charity event. The person who is the PRO to this committee has to invite a person from the Rep (the local news paper).

He also commented on how the committees operated:

First you market it [a new idea] to the school. To the staff members so that they buy the idea as we are bringing it as the committee. Then when they have bought it, we market it outside.

This working procedure was further elaborated on by the educator:

We sit down and discuss as a committee. For instance if we talk about sport I cannot say, this year as a sport master, I instruct that we will play this match and that match. We sit in a staff meeting and decide which areas we can play with. We throw ideas [around]. We concentrate on those areas. Ours as the committee is to check which schools we can play with. Then we come back to teachers with the schools that are prepared to play with us and ask for their feelings.

Learners also participate in committees. Learner 2 put it this way: “In entertainment we do come up with ideas as to what must be done. How can we be entertained?”

The notion of support among the staff members with regard to the functioning of these committees emerged from some of the respondents. The HOD felt that the committee members got full support from other teachers including those that were not in that particular committee. The HOD explained:

We really do [get support]. In so much we allow inputs from people who are not members of the committee. When we have an activity we draw a programme that will make sure that everybody in the staff participates in that activity. We only work as monitors that everything goes according to the plan.

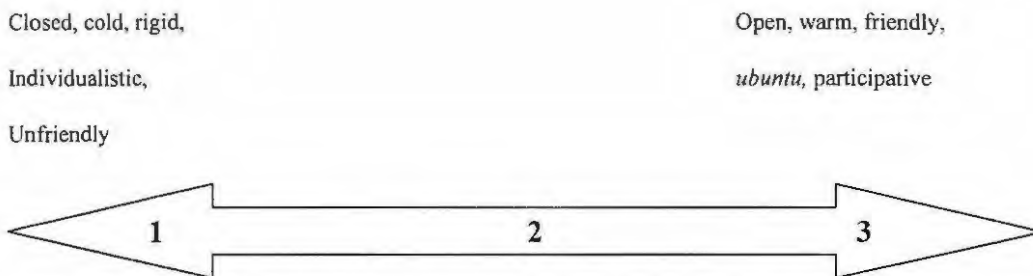
However, it was revealed that support of some committees was not always good. The educator said: “Sometimes as a leader you get frustrated. For example recently we organised a march...Fifteen out of twenty two teachers indicated that they will go, but at the latest hour [*sic*] most of these educators withdrew and only seven left to go for the trip.”

As has been the case with other committees, minutes reflect a sense of involvement and participation in these internal structures. In one meeting staff meeting (01/08/06), for example, there is reference to ‘old girls’ and ‘old boys’ being encouraged to merge with the current

students to access funds from other youth organisations for helping the needy. Since it is not possible to report on *all* of the documentation I move on to the next category in the hope that I have provided an adequate picture.

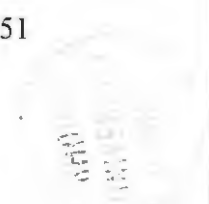
4.2.3 Organisation culture

I felt it was important to gain some insight into the organisation culture of the school in which this study was based. As discussed in the previous chapter, literature suggests a strong link between leadership and culture, and I felt that by understanding respondents' perceptions of the culture of the school would be important since it was the context in which leadership functioned. Since organisation culture is a relatively new and academic notion I decided to simplify the task of gaining perceptions by designing a simple scale depicting a continuum of types of culture (or climate) ranging from negative to positive.



Respondents were then asked to 'place' their school on this scale. Acknowledging the simplicity and obvious shortcomings of this device I nevertheless found it useful as a rough indicator. I was, after all, not investigating culture or climate, and all I needed was a simple way of getting a response. Respondents were also asked for reasons why they chose a particular position.

Almost all the respondents describe it as being warm, open, collegial and friendly. The principal said: "I would put it between 2 and 3. The culture of the school is warm generally. It is open. But within the institution itself, there will be those people who are closed, who are sticking to



legislation , who will take you to court if you have done this and that.” The parent chose position

3. She said the school is very warm and explained:

When visiting the school you get warm welcome. You don't feel as SGB but not a teacher and teachers undermine you. Other teachers play the role of social workers. They look into problems of learners who are at school.

The HOD had the same opinion as he described it as “More inclined towards 3. I'll give it 2, 5 because we do have challenges”. The educator saw it as being 3: “We are in 3. Our institution is different. We are a family. We don't have cliques at school”. He explained his observations by saying: “If we don't agree on a particular issue, we don't agree as a collective, not as in certain pockets. We don't encourage cliques.” There seemed to be other factors that the educator had in mind to have identified the culture of this institution so positively. He said if one had a personal problem it was easy to share it with other colleagues and “If one is frustrated by the Department of Education, we sympathise with him/her. His/her problem is ours. We seek advice together.” This idea of believing that “your problem is our problem”, that sense of being the community, *ubuntu*, was also pointed out by the HOD when he told this story:

My first day here at school I received a message that my dad has passed away. The funeral was to be at ... approximately 400km from here. I was surprised to see my colleagues at the funeral. They attended the funeral.

He also mentioned that a colleague had had a graduation ceremony and the programme had been run his colleagues. He said “The programme director came from the school and even the guest speaker.”

Documents again bore out these impressions. Minutes of a Staff Meeting (09/05/06) show that the principal congratulated teachers who passed degrees and also a choir conductor for winning a competition A sense of ubuntu was also apparent at a SMT meeting when they decided to give an incentive to a teacher who had brought glory to the school (SMT Meeting 15/06/05).

When asked how this culture had come about the educator stressed the fact that everybody contributed to this type of culture. The fact that the educator described this institution as a family is also picked up by the principal: “For example this thing of calling one another by clan names. It is another way of creating a warm atmosphere. ...that is the way of calling one another.” The educator emphasised this: “The principal is not far away from us, is our colleague. He is readily accessible.”

When I perused the Staff Meeting minute book I came across two items, the Health Advisory Committee and the Candlelight Club. Since I was not familiar with these I asked the HOD to enlighten me and he gave me a file containing records of all the activities of these committees. I also obtained articles that had appeared in the local newspaper, *The Representative*. The membership of the Health Advisory Committee was as follows:

- SGB members – 2 parents
- Educators – 2 members
- Learners -2 members
- Community - 2members
- Co-opted members - Education official
- Traditional leaders/councilors
- Religious leaders
- NGO's
- SAPS

This committee looked at problems of both learners and educators, even personal problems. It was clear that the committee had helped a number of learners who were struggling to make ends meet.

The Candlelight Club started as a debating group and later expanded to include charity work as one of their responsibilities. They decided to fundraise so that they could give food to hungry

orphans. It was very interesting to note that this Club had been initiated by the learners. The Clubs' activities attracted the attention of the local press, and the following photograph appeared in the newspaper, *The Representative* (25 March 2006:8):



The photograph depicts learners and teachers together with the donations they handed over to orphaned children seated in front. The accompanying article claimed: “The pupils soon decided to diversify the club’s activities, and this year, members have also become involved in charity work” (*ibid.*). They also gave toys to needy children in hospital. The newspaper reported one of the learners saying “We raised funds at school to buy toys to show these children that we care – and to put smiles on their faces” (*ibid.*).

The English teacher, the HOD I interviewed, was quoted as saying:

We motivate pupils throughout the process of helping others. These projects teach them responsibility. We believe this helps young people to become responsible citizens.

It is difficult to put one's finger on exactly what it is that has made this school, but certainly the school's organisation culture is characterised by caring and warmth, *ubuntu*, and generosity, even among the learners. It is in this kind of environment that the leadership of the school operates, and I would argue that understanding the organisation culture is key to understanding the principal's leadership role and style.

I now turn to some of the challenges raised by various respondents. I was particularly interested in whether the chosen leadership approach (participatory) presented any challenges, but answers frequently touched on general challenges and I include some of these because they are, indirectly, relevant to the research question.

4.2.4 Challenges

Even an organisation that is warm and open has challenges, and so it is with this school. The challenges that exist in a school can be felt or observed by the principal, educators, learners and even the parents.

The first challenge mentioned by the principal was that of priorities in terms of what should be bought. Educators tended to differ with the principal as to what should be bought first. The principal put it:

I do get challenges from the teachers in the sense that some of the ideas that I have as a person may sometimes contradict with their own ideas, in that somebody may need, you know, to be concerned with sport e.g. instead of the admin matters.

Another challenge noticed by the principal was when teachers were divided. The principal explained: "Where I can say these are the minorities and these are the majorities. You need to weigh which side. Even the minorities may have a noble idea over the popular idea."

The principal also experienced difficulties *vis a vis* policy and unions. Generally principals are regarded as employers since they represent the Department of Education at school. They are there to implement the policy of the Department of Education. The principal noted the problem when the policies of the Department of Education were challenged by teacher unions. He becomes confused as to which side to choose, the union side or the Department of Education side. He has to implement the policies that are challenged by the unions. He asserted:

It does sometimes give problems in that you feel that you are torn apart as a principal. You sometimes don't know whether you are an employer or an employee. At school as a principal you are regarded as an employer because you are the representative of the department. But deep down in your heart you

are supportive of the moves that seek to better the situation or the lot of teachers, even myself. So it does create problems in terms of your role as a principal where you have to choose whether you are an employer or an employee. Sometimes these policies they come up with ... when you try to implement them they are rejected by the teachers.

The principal's participatory style of leadership was also seen as potentially problematic. There was a misunderstanding between the SMT and the music committee about the renovation of a music class (SMT Meeting 27/05/05) and the HOD noted that a firm decision was needed. He said:

Perhaps he is too laxy [*sic*]... now by being laxy I mean sometimes one would feel that he had to, perhaps take a very hash decision over something but he would let people decide and in a democratic situation it is not always right to let people take a final decision.. Sometimes you feel that this is what is right and that people should do that.

The educator also believed that democracy had its shortcomings. He explained:

You know I can say there are a lot of challenges because democracy has got shortcomings because sometimes you would require one to be seen as a leader or a supervisor but he/she cannot exercise his/her power to the fullest because h/she has to consult with everybody and take into consideration each and every one's views.

The principal also noted this challenge: "And also the fact that people have many rights today, it becomes a challenge."

The learners focused on diversity, people with different behaviours and from different backgrounds. Learner I noted:

It is very much of a problem to run a school because at school there are many people. They have different behaviours. So first, it is very hard to discipline a child of another family because we are from different backgrounds. ...and old people too, for instance teachers themselves have different characters. So the principal has got that challenge of dealing with these different characters.

The principal also found social/cultural issues challenging:

Challenges that are related to family matters in terms of the needs. But they are not much of a problem because we sit down and resolve them...Social problems. Children who do not have parents, children who are suffering from their homes (*sic.*) who have single parents, and there is this HIV/AIDS. Children who are raped, who have poor unemployed parents and so on.

Teacher absenteeism was another challenge faced by the principal. This was discussed in the SGB meeting (SGB Meeting 13/02/06).

The challenges seem to centre on the difficulty of gaining complete agreement, and the thin line between allowing total participation and making a unilateral ruling. The principal's participatory style of leadership is clearly not plain sailing.

4.3 Summary

The picture that emerges is of a principal committed to participatory leadership, driven both by what is officially expected as well as by what he simply believes to be the way to lead. He is democratic by nature, and his sense of humanity is evident in his leadership role and style. He is caring. He sees the school as a second home for teachers and learners. He continually motivates teachers. He is a listener. He encourages self-development. He has established a system of management that seems decentralized with committees taking the lead in a broad range of areas.

Leadership of these committees is left to teachers and even learners. He claims to be “only the coordinator”.

At the same time it is clear that his leadership is not without its problems. He admits to the difficulty in getting everyone to agree on everything, and how frustrating it can be when everyone has to be consulted. The staff interviews have the same feelings, and add that the principal’s style is sometimes *too* participatory.

Finally, there is the sense that the principal experiences tension between his role as employer and leader his role as employee of the state. When he has to implement policy that is problematic to teachers and/or teacher unions he feels that this creates tension because it suggests an autocratic leadership approach.

These findings form the basis of the discussion on Chapter Five where I attempt to make sense of the data in light of relevant literature.

Chapter Five

Discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I interpret and discuss the data to make sense of my respondents' experience and understanding of participative leadership in their institution. My arguments will be informed by literature reviewed in Chapter Two as well as literature that may now seem relevant and helpful.

This study set out to determine whether and to what extent a school in the Eastern Cape had responded to expectations expressed in policy documents (and literature) to adopt a participatory leadership approach. As the data presented in Chapter Four suggest, the answer is complex and extends beyond what I was originally focusing on, namely the leadership role of the principal. In fact it seems obvious now that it is not possible to consider the principal's leadership *apart from* the context in which he leads. In many ways this context – the school and even beyond – reflects his leadership approach. His leadership and the school's structure, in turn, shape and are shaped by the organisation culture of the school. It seems that three issues - leadership, structure and culture – are intermeshed and only make complete sense when one is considered in the context of the others. For the sake of clarity, however, I present them separately, but attempt to draw links where appropriate. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the challenges the school faces in its journey towards participative management and leadership.

5.2 Leadership, structure and culture

The data indicate that this school has responded well to expectations and has succeeded in adopting participatory, consultative management and governance approaches. However, it would

not be true to claim that the principal has had to adapt his leadership approach. Data suggest that he has always thought of his leadership as 'democratic'. What does seem to have happened is that the structural changes brought about as a result of policy – notably the establishment of levels of decision-making bodies (SMT, SGB) - has *enabled* or made possible the devolution of authority and distribution of responsibility and decision-making. In this sense the post-1994 changes have played into the hands of the principal.

5.2.1 Leadership

The principal's leadership is participatory. Data have shown how there is widespread participation and consultation in the management of the school through its various committees and clubs. The school policy's claim that educators should be actively involved in "debates" is more than mere rhetoric. But it would clearly not be enough simply to claim that the principal is participatory in his leadership; the picture painted in Chapter Two is far richer than this, and here I need to draw on theoretical frameworks from the field to act as lenses through which his leadership can be understood.

Timperley (2005:395) finds the idea of distributed leadership a useful lens: "The idea of leadership as distributed across multiple people and situations has proven to be ...useful framework for understanding the realities of schools and how they might improve". In this school the use of teams seems to have distributed leadership among many members, including learners in the case of the Candlelight Club. These teams have leaders who convene meetings and set agendas. The principal understands leadership in terms of activities and interactions that are distributed across many people as noted by Timperley (2005:395) and this may be one way in which he shapes the goals, motivations and actions of others (Bush 2003:8). The advantages of distributing leadership in this way have been discussed in Chapter Two (pp 15 -17). According to MacBeath (2005:353) distributed leadership is premised on trust and there is evidence that the principal trusts his followers enough to entrust important work to them. The example reported in Chapter Four of the sports convener challenging the SMT and the principal shows mutual trust. He (the principal) trusts him as the sport convener as one who is involved in sport. Similarly, had

the sports convener not trusted the principal, he would have not approached him on this matter. MacBeath (2005:353) argues that where there is no mutual trust, relationships and respect are compromised and there will be mistrust which has a corrosive influence. The fact there is free participation through various portfolios in committees also indicates an acceptance others' leadership capabilities (MacBeath 2005:353). According to MacBeath (2005:354) distribution of leadership also implies an ability to relinquish one's role as an ultimate decision-maker. This element is also strongly characteristic of the principal's leadership; he describes himself as "only the coordinator", showing to what extent he has committed himself to a distributed model of leadership.

The characteristic feature of distributed leadership seems to be that it is more than delegation, more than simply allocating tasks to different people. It emerges from the interactions between leaders and followers, often across traditionally defined organisational roles. According to Copeland (2003:378) "Decisions about who leads and who follows are dictated by the problem situation, not necessarily by where one sits on the hierarchy". My sense of this case is that this is how leadership is understood there, and the best example is perhaps the Candlelight Club, an initiative driven by the learners. Learners are, perhaps, at the lower end of the hierarchy in schools, yet at this school they felt the freedom to take the lead in responding to community needs so successfully that the principal mentions them in a special letter to the MEC reported earlier.

The ability to relinquish the role of sole decision-maker indicates another kind of commitment to others. It suggests care and interest in the welfare of others, and here the notion of servant leadership is helpful. The principal tries to help learners with personal problems. He is willing to see other people develop as he encourages teachers to attend developmental courses and to apply for promotion. The HOD noted that teachers do their work because they do not want to disappoint the principal, linking with Kouzes and Posner's (2002:330) that to be a leader, one has to be a friend. Russell (2001:79) describes servant leaders as people who "appreciate, value, encourage and care for their constituencies". These are also what Broodryk (2005:78) refers to *ubuntu* values, "...values such as love, compassion, kindness ... and harmony". The principal's

encouraging approach can also be observed when he congratulated the teachers who graduated and the choir conductor who won a competition in a staff meeting. It appears that the principal tries to create a warm social world for other people in this school. He thinks of the school as a family.

Russell (2001:80) also argues that servant leaders demonstrate respect and in this study mutual respect between all stakeholders (including the parent) was very noticeable. The parent described him as “the light of the school”. Teachers do not do their work because they are afraid of the principal but because they like him and they do not want to disappoint him. When people respect one another, they usually do not want to hurt one another. This mutual respect has inculcated commitment in all the stakeholders of the school. Respondents also described the principal as a good listener, another key feature of servant leadership (Russell (2001:82). Broodryk (2005:155) is also of the opinion that the ability to listen creates an image of a committed, caring and trustworthy person.

Transformational leadership is another useful lens to apply to the principal’s leadership. Let me look at this element *vis-à-vis* transactional leadership. As discussed earlier the principal encourages teachers to apply for promotion posts. He does not, for example, promise them posts within the school as a reward for their good work, which would be a transactional approach. Bush (2003:107) explains transactional leadership as “leadership in which relationships are based upon an exchange of valued resources”. Moreover, the very fact that the principal distributes leadership as discussed above suggests a transformational approach, as Barnett *et al.* (1999:27) explain: “transformational leadership is sensitive to organizational building, developing shared vision, distributing leadership and building school culture necessary to current restructuring efforts in schools.” Literature also shows a transformational leader as uplifting other people to be leaders themselves which is what the principal’s distributed leadership approach tries to achieve. For Hoy and Miskel (1996:394) role modeling is a key feature of transformational leaders as they assert “followers tend to trust, admire and respect them. They become role models of their followers.” Again there is ample evidence to suggest that this principal is a role model to all.

Teachers at this school are even 'driven' to teach over weekends, motivated by the strong example the principal sets.

Against this picture of the principal as a leader it is possible to make sense of the other features of the school I mentioned earlier, namely the structure and culture. It is clear that the principal's leadership has been a determining factor in how the school operates and what it stands for.

5.2.2 Structure

Schools as organisations are inherently formal structures, and, according to Bush (2003:45) will always have some "bureaucratic elements". This is true also of the school I studied. There are management structures that are ultimately accountable to the principal, and, as he has claimed, to the SGB. He is also conscious of his own accountability to his employers as discussed earlier when he reported on the tension he experienced. However, as Bush (2003: 40) cautions, even formal structures may "benefit from informal contacts" depending on how 'open' or 'closed' they are. They may also "conceal a range of different styles of management" and this is perhaps one of the keys to understanding the structure of this school.

The previous chapter drew attention to the large number of committees and clubs involved in the life of the school. These range from committees officially recommended by policy (the SMT, SGB and LCR) and those developed internally under the leadership of the school, such as the Candlelight Club and the Health Advisory Committee. As has been argued, it is through this committee system that distributed and participative leadership is managed. But equally significant is that community involvement is also enabled through these committees, notably the two mentioned above as well as the SGB. This kind of openness to the community is what could be described as an "open system" (Bush 2003: 42). These two factors – the decentralised spread of leadership and decision-making across other structures, and the school's open relationship with its community – have partly been brought about by structural organisation.

Broodryk's (2005:141) notion of an open style of management is helpful here in understanding the school's structure. Broodryk (2005:141) represents what he calls an open style by inverting the pyramid usually associated with hierarchical (closed) systems, and, drawing on an *ubuntu* worldview, argues that in open leadership systems authority is spread throughout the organisation and much of it rests with members and not exclusively with the leader. He refers to this as "shepherd" management, a description coined by Nelson Mandela, which I believe to be strongly resonant with servant leadership. This model (see Figure 1 on page 17) goes some way towards helping one to understand the structure of the school I studied. While the formally appointed bodies – such as the SMT – have clear line functions, the internal organisation of the school's activities indicates another kind of function, one in which initiative and leadership are encouraged. The membership of the Health Advisory Committee reported earlier shows an amazing array of representation: SGB members, educators, learners, community members, an education official, traditional leaders/councilors, religious leaders, NGO's and the SAPS. This shows the extent to which the school regards social outreach as important, as well as the extent to which the leadership of the school encourages and enables participation.

How these structural elements impact on organisation culture is discussed in the next section.

5.2.3 Culture

This section will attempt to show how the organisation culture of the school flows from both the leadership (at different levels) as well as the school's structure.

In characterising the organisation culture of the school the respondents were virtually unanimous in describing it as warm, open, friendly, with *ubuntu* values. Following Schein (1992:5) it would be fair to argue that this culture has been brought about through leadership. The principal has emerged as a warm and caring person, interested in the well-being of all members of the school, perhaps an embodiment of what Schein (1992:5) referred to as "one of the decisive functions of leadership ...[namely] the creation ... management of culture." Here it is necessary to bring in

the notion of values, the bedrock of organisation culture. The organizational culture of the school rests on the values and beliefs of the members of that particular school. These are values shared by the individuals (Thurlow, Bush, and Coleman 2003:89) and in the case of this school values such as openness, caring, community involvement and mutual trust emerge from the data.

The pervasiveness of values such as these bring about a culture that Broodryk (2005:156) describes a “family atmosphere”, characterized by “attitudes reflecting human approaches, harmony, friendliness, kindness, cooperativeness, caring, trust ...” It seems significant that the word “family” emerged in the data as the educator’s way of describing the culture. In the case of this school this particular was it seems itself seems to have some history. For several years after the school was founded the two principals shared everything, the schools as well as office space. The data contain many examples of people caring for and about each other, so that there is a strong sense of community in the school. In fact, this sense extends even beyond the school, as the reports on past pupils’ willingness to join forces with learners to provide social work show. Together with Broodryk’s (2005) family metaphor, the concept which best captures what I believe is happening here is Sergiovanni’s (1992) community metaphor. As a result of the prevalent leadership approach, the organisation structure and the atmosphere of care and love the school culture resembles that of a community. It is in a community that leadership is distributed and values jointly developed and lived out. The school’s level of openness also suggests community organisation. I would say everyone involved in this school seems “glued together by community values, beliefs and norms” (Sergiovanni 1992:41).

This ‘oneness’ and doing things together as a sign of community life can be observed in a number of cases: staff members attending a funeral of a newly appointed HOD’s father; celebrations done when the choir has won a competition; the graduation party of one of the staff members ‘run by’ colleagues. This behaviour reflects the values Peck (1987:59) has in mind when he describes a ‘genuine’ community as “a group of individuals who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together and delight in each other”. As reported earlier, everyone, including the principal, is also called by his or her clan name, a sign of closeness and love among the amaXhosa.

The final theoretical perspective I want to draw on in order to interpret what I have found is that of the learning organisation. As reported in Chapter Two there seem to be two ways of looking at this concept. One refers to learning about teaching learning, and is characterised by instructional leadership. The other is the notion that a learning organisation is one which “constantly learns from its past and present experiences and contemplates for the future” (Voulalas 2004:196). Hence, according to Davidoff *et al.* (1994:8) learning organisations “living organizations” as they constantly grow in response to challenges and changing times.

There is little evidence to suggest that the principal in this study adopts instructional leadership behaviour. He does teach – which is unusual for principals – and he does talk about teaching and results, but there are no signs of the kind of deliberate interventions one would expect from instructional leaders. He does not, for example, go out of his way to arrange staff seminars or workshops to work on curriculum matters.

But it is evident from the data that the school has responded to the imperative to ‘democratise’ and adopt participative management approaches. Examples of this kind of leadership have been fully described. It is also clear that the school is responding to community or social needs, and this too has been discussed. In this sense the school seems to have recreated itself (Senge 1994:13). Further evidence of the fact that the school is indeed a ‘living organisation’ comes in the form of the principal’s efforts to engage the government in efforts to improve the school’s facilities and infrastructure and constantly being “on his toes” in terms of opportunities to learn and grow. In this sense there is what Lakomski (2005: 39) calls “ongoing learning [which] is believed to be the best preparation for the future”. By trying to acquire computers the principal saw the importance of being connected with the environment (Voulalas 2004:187). Increasingly management literature refers to ICT as central to the role and function of management. Speakers in the international conference I referred to in Chapter Two (DoE 2005b:43) argued that ICT gives people the ability to communicate quickly and allows them to communicate and collaborate all around the world. This of course would enhance the school’s ability to be a learning organization. Moloï ((2005:196) highlights this as she asserts:

A learning organisation also includes educators who are capable of thinking differently and prepared to adopt new mindsets, because schools like all other organizations are confronted with continuous change.

In trying to learn from other schools the principal is guarding against what Bennett, Crawford and Cartwright (2003:198) refer to as “the isolated professional culture common in schools [which] is an obstacle to the development of teacher leadership.”

4.2.4 Challenges

A commitment to participative leadership does, however, pose challenges and these need to be noted.

It was found, for example, that learners did not always feel included or consulted. Even the parent mentioned that learners are often excluded from decisions pertaining to sensitive matters such as staff issues at SGB meeting. While this is probably not what policy had in mind it is also not unusual. Recent research (Nongubo 2004: ii) has found that, in all of the previously disadvantaged secondary schools in Grahamstown, learners felt under-valued and overlooked. Furthermore, teachers expressed grave reservations about involving learners in all decisions (*ibid.*). There still appears to be an atmosphere of suspicion (and even hostility) surrounding learner involvement in management and governance, and no doubt this will continue to be a contentious issue for many years to come.

The problem of being ‘too participative’, as well as the associated problem of the principal feeling torn between his role as employer and that of employee also surfaced. This, too, is not entirely unexpected. In his review of a ‘collegial’ model of management (which emphasises participation and consensus) Bush (2003: 83) warns that these approaches “may be difficult to sustain in view of the requirement that heads and principals remain accountable to the governing

body and to various external groups". The external groups in this case are the District Office and ultimately the DoE. The principal in this study revealed that he felt pressured when expected to implement policies the staff and/or unions rejected. Clearly in these cases he is acting against the wishes of his followers and hence subverting participatory democracy. He is probably even acting his own judgment because he is by nature democratic and people-centred. But he also has no choice since the bureaucratic expectation is that he will 'follow orders'.

One argument could be that in his case the tension is severe because of his preferred style, i.e. he feels particularly stressed because he does not subscribe to 'giving orders' even though he himself has to 'follow orders'. It is also interesting that the teachers do not object to this behaviour; in fact, they object to the opposite, that he is sometimes 'too democratic'. The HOD argued that "in a democratic situation it is not always right to let people take a final decision ...". It is as though he realised that it was not always realistic or desirable for everyone to participate in decision-making. Sometimes the leader has to make the call, and in these cases one would believe that he would act on shared values. The expectation that he would make the 'right' decision is even more pronounced in these circumstances, and practices such as "reflexive self monitoring" (DoE 2005 b: 42) and Christie's (DoE 2005b: 42) reminder that principals should constantly align their decisions with their deeper values become important here.

The research also revealed that it was always possible to achieve consensus. The teachers could not always agree on certain issues. The principal also revealed that sometimes it becomes difficult to apply the 'parliamentary democracy' where you think in terms of the majority group and the minority group. Often is the minority group that has the good idea, "The noble idea" as he expressed it.

The school has been projected by the respondents as having a warm culture, and a collaborative and coherent staff. However, the educator (as a sport master) drew attention to a case of lack of support from teachers. In this case teachers withdrew their names from the list of people who were to attend a match at the last moment. The principal also noted a case of lazy teachers who

do not want to participate in extra-mural activities. These are examples of what happens in reality, even within a collegial and involved staff. It would be naïve to imagine that every person will at all times give full support of every single event or activity. Participative leadership presents on-going challenges, and the continued motivation of teachers is probably chief among these.

Other challenges – such as absenteeism and disagreement on how money should be spent – recorded in the data are not discussed here. They do not seem to be central to the heart of this study and are simply examples of what usually happens when large numbers of people work together towards a common goal.

In the next chapter – the final one – I conclude this study.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I summarise my key findings and consider their implications for further research and practice. I also discuss the limitations of my study.

6.2 Summary of findings

The study set out to explore how a semi-urban school had responded to the challenges posed by policy and supported by literature to embrace participative forms of leadership. To reach this goal I interviewed six members of the organisation and studied several key documents.

The picture that has emerged is a positive one. The data have shown that the school is structured in such a way as to enable large-scale participation in decision-making. The committee structure ensures the distribution of leadership. There is a strong sense of ownership and pride among all members. Even the learners – who do not feel quite as involved as other members – identify strongly with the vision and mission of the school, and also demonstrate leadership and initiative through clubs and societies. This way of working results in a culture of openness, caring and mutual respect. The school responds to social needs, and is also attuned to the need to grow and be a learning organisation.

It would, however, not be true to claim that this has come about because of post-1994 policy. The school is not the way it is simply because of what is officially expected, or through mere compliance. The key to the school's leadership ethos is the principal, a man who appears to be democratic by nature. He is essentially a caring individual, one who puts the welfare of others

first and sees the school as an extension of teachers' and learners' homes. At the same time, however, he is also strategic in his thinking, planning ahead and trying to develop a 'state of the art school'. The generosity with which he opened his school to me – even allowing me to take documents off-site – simply underlines his complete openness and readiness to learn.

It would appear that while the structures that became formalized as a result of post-1994 policy have not actually been the cause of the school's way of working, they have enabled a particular leadership. They have been the vehicles for this kind of leadership to flourish. Hence, to return to the research question that sought to find out whether a shift in leadership style had taken place the answer is affirmative only if the entire organisation is taken into account. The true answer is more complex and has to take account of the principal as a human being, his values, his beliefs and his humanity as a prime example of a 'shepherd' leader. According to this model a key feature is the visibility of others (other than the leader) in the organisation, and this study has found high degrees of visibility on the part of all members. Hence the answer also has to account for the readiness and maturity of followers to take up leadership positions as well as the culture produced by this behaviour. Focusing on any one of these forces – the principal's leadership, the school structure, and the school culture – to the exclusion of the others cannot provide an answer. The answer lies in how these interact, shape and are shaped by each other.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

In my study there are areas and issues which I came across and could not explore fully since they lay outside either the scope of this study or my research question. I focus on the following two:

- The question of accountability in a school. The fact that principals should find themselves so pressured, especially when they are required to lead participatively, is worrying, and research is needed to explore ways in which this pressure could be relieved. The fact that principals are still regarded as mere employees of the state who have to follow orders argues against current notions of self-management.

- The role of learners in the management and governance of schools. This has long been a contentious issue, and research seems only to point out the problems. Ways need to be found of how learners can be meaningfully incorporated without arousing the suspicion of teachers and parents.

Organisation culture emerged as a powerful force in this study, but could not be pursued since it was not the central focus. I believe studies focusing on culture and how it is produced and maintained could make a valuable contribution of our understanding of education challenges in this country.

6.4 Recommendations for practice

6.4.1 Recommendations for principals

“The End of Leadership as We Know It?” [Lakomski 2005:57].

Principals should be aware of current leadership theories. They should understand that the transformation of schools does not lie with exceptional leaders; the time for one heroic leader is past, and current theories emphasise that it is through developing good relationships that leaders succeed. Ways need to be found – through workshops and seminars for example – of keeping principals abreast of developing and emerging leadership thinking.

This study has found that the practice of distributing leadership throughout the organisation pays dividends. Principals should be encouraged to adopt this mindset, and not to feel threatened when leadership emerges within the organisation. Leadership may even emerge among learners, and this too needs to be encouraged.

This study has also shown that participative leadership works, and that the practice of making it possible for many or all stakeholders to contribute to the school is a sound one. Principals need to learn how to do this, again in ways that do not threaten their authority.

6.4.2 Recommendations for the District Office

The District Office should also understand that the transformation of schools does not lie with one exceptional leader. It should understand the concept of distributed leadership when monitoring schools.

Equally important is the requirement that senior DoE officials who work with schools are aware of the power of participative leadership, so that they can provide appropriate guidance and encouragement.

Empowering the principal and the SMT is the responsibility of the District Office. It should also support all schools not only effective schools.

6.5 Limitations of my study

The scope of this study clearly makes it impossible to generalise findings to other situations. Clearly a bigger sample may have yielded richer and more comprehensive findings, and this might have made more confident generalization possible. Nevertheless I hope I have achieved a level of richness that will allow readers to recognise what they believe may be true and convincing, and in this way find ways of applying this to new situations.

6.6 Conclusion

This study has looked at a school which is in many ways exemplary, and it is my hope that I have given a good enough account of its leadership to inspire and perhaps teach others. Revealing the relevance of new leadership theories has been exciting. My suspicion is that there are still principals who believe that they can lead the school alone. The way in which school structure, culture and leadership interact to produce a school which could be a model for others has much to teach us.

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Appendix A

Interview questions

The principal:

1. When did you become the principal of a school?
2. When did you become the principal of this school?

These two questions wanted to establish the career history of the principal. It was important for me to have a sense of how long he had been a principal because I wanted to probe shifting perceptions of leadership pre- and post-1994.

3. How would you describe yourself as a leader?

This was to probe whether and to what extent the principal had embraced participative (democratic) leadership as advocated in policy.

4. Do you think your leadership style/approach has changed in any way over the past ten years? In what way(s)? And why?

This was aimed at the principal's perception of his leadership – I wanted him also to reflect on influences that may have brought about changes.

5. If there are differences, do you think your present style is more effective?

This question wanted to encourage the principal to think critically of his leadership in terms of effectiveness.

6. What are the challenges you are experiencing in your leadership of this school?

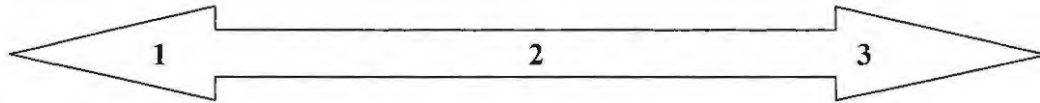
Here I wanted to probe how the principal saw the problems and challenges he faced – what were his perceptions of the challenges?

7. How would you describe the culture of this school?

Here I showed the respondents the following graph I developed from my readings to depict varying levels of warmth and openness in organisational culture:

Closed, cold, rigid,
Individualistic,
Unfriendly

Open, warm, friendly,
ubuntu



The HOD:

1. When did you start teaching?
2. When did you become an HOD?

The objectives of these two questions were to get to know whether HOD had started teaching before 1994. If the HOD started teaching before 1994, even if he was not an HOD at that time, he would have an idea of leadership styles that were used pre-1994.

- 3 How was the principal managing the school before 1994?

This question wanted to know the style of leadership during the apartheid time. This would help to establish whether there is a change in the style after 1994.

4. Has there been a change since then?

This question wanted to establish the difference in leadership styles before 1994 and after 1994. I wanted to know whether there had been a shift to a democratic style.

5. What are the challenges that the principal is experiencing in his leadership style?

Here I want to know the weaknesses of the current style of leadership.

6. How would you describe the culture of this school? (explained above)

The learners:

1. When did you come to this school?

This would determine whether the learner would be able to know the overall activities of the school and the style of the principal's leadership.

2. Is there any role do you play in the decision making in the school?

This question sought to establish whether learners were involved in decision making of the school or not. This would help to expose the style of leadership of the principal.

3. Are there areas where you feel learners should be involved?

This question wanted to know the extent of learner involvement in the decision making.

4. What are the difficulties in running a school?

Here I wanted to get the challenges of running a school, especially, now that there are new policies.

5. How would you describe the culture of this school?

The parent:

1. When did you become the member of the SGB?

This would help to gauge her knowledge of school activities. This question therefore sought to establish the experience of the parent with regard to school activities.

2. Do you play any role as the SGB parent in the decision making in this school?

This question tried to explore the extent and nature of parents' involvement in running a school.

3. Has there been a change in the role played by parents in this school?

This question hoped to probe perception of change, for example increased activity.

4. What are the problems facing the principal?

This question hoped to explore challenges of post-1994 school management.

5. How would you describe the culture of this school?

Appendix B

Follow-up interview questions

Principal

1. Last time you said that your style of leadership was in line with the modern legislation, which advocates participatory democracy. Is your style of leadership what it is ONLY because of legislation, or are there OTHER reasons?
2. The management structures that exist here are SMT, SGB and RCL. How do they operate? How are decisions made? (Can you give few examples?)
3. What happens to those decisions? Who acts on them?
4. How do those committees work?
Do they have meetings? Who do they report to?
5. What are the biggest challenges of democratic leadership?
You mentioned people having different or contradictory opinions, but are there any other problems?
6. How would you describe yourself as a leader in the new South Africa?

HOD

1. What did you mean when you said "the principal; is laxly?" Give reasons.
2. You say that "Everybody has a say in the decision making". Can you give examples of how people have a say in decision making?

3. Are you a member of any committee here at school?

4. How do you operate as a committee?

The educator

1. You say that "Everybody is involved in the programmes of the school, learners, educators and parents." How are they involved? Give examples.

2. What is the advantage of this?

3. Are you a member of any committee?

4. How do you operate as a committee?

Learners

1. How do you play a role in decision making?

2. What are the problems /challenges of being in the RCL?

3. Do teachers take you seriously?

4. Do you participate in the committees formed by teachers?

The parent

1. Could you give examples of how the SGB makes decisions?

2. What happens to those decisions?

3. Which policies do /did you participate in making as the SGB? How did this participation work?