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School Management Team members' perceptions of their roles in managing Grahamstown secondary schools

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ABSTRACT

During the apartheid era, that is, before 1994, the education management system in South Africa was fragmented, authoritarian and top-down. Principals were expected to manage schools on their own without consulting the rest of the staff. The birth of political democracy in 1994 resulted in many changes in the education system. These changes include the creation of one national department. In line with this democratisation came the concept of school management teams (SMTs).

Because of the democratic nature of this kind of a structure (SMT), it is required that educators work co-operatively and as a team. This has been problematic in some schools where the principal has traditionally felt comfortable taking decisions on his or her own without any input from relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, through the legacy of apartheid, teachers themselves have dogmatically been oriented to being the recipients of instructions and to view management as the prerogative of the principals only. The formalisation of SMTs thus brings new challenges to both principals and staff members, essentially the notion of democratic or team-management. The object of this study is to find out how the concept of democratic management is being received.

This study includes all the government-aided high schools in Grahamstown (ten of them). Studying all 10 high schools - 6 from the local township, 3 ex-model C schools, and 1 from the coloured township – has produced a broad and varied picture of how SMTs are being received in Grahamstown secondary schools.

The study was framed within the interpretive approach, and sought to unpack the perceptions of SMT members with regard to SMTs. An interpretive paradigm made it possible for me to gain an in-depth understanding of SMT members' perceptions of team-management within their contexts. I used questionnaires, interviews and observation as research tools to gather data.

This study has found that, although the concept of team management is well-received, there are significant obstacles to the acceptance of teamwork as an alternative form of management. Many of these may be the result of decades of disempowering

governance strategies, resulting in impoverished notions of school ownership and joint responsibility. Some relate to the political nature of schools as organisations. Despite these problems, the study has confirmed that team-management is the preferred approach for a variety of reasons. Team-management usually results in enriched decision-making, the sharing of responsibilities and higher levels of support. A major systemic shortcoming highlighted by the study is the absence of meaningful training in democratic educational management.

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ACRONYMS USED IN THIS STUDY

DET:	Department of Education and Training
DoE:	Department of Education
EDO:	Education development Officer
ERA:	Education Reform Act
GC:	Grade Coordinator
HOD:	Head of Department
LEA:	Local Education Authority
PTSA:	Parent Teacher Student Association
RCL:	Representative Council of Learners
SASA:	South African Schools' Act
SATA:	South African Teachers' Association
SDP:	School Development Plan
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMT:	School Management Team
SRC:	Student Representative Council

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and background

This research is informed by my work experience. My interest arose as a result of my being curious about the way in which the SMT in my school works. Having been at the school for six years and observed the management taking decisions – sometimes good and sometimes bad - made me to want to know what was actually happening in the SMT. As a teacher outside the school management it seemed, to me, that there was a degree of overriding of staff decisions by the leader. I am aware that the principal is entitled to making certain decisions without having to consult, but my interest was to find out what extent that kind of decision-making was acceptable, and to what degree the principal needs to be accountable to his/her staff and other stakeholders. This prompted me to investigate how SMT members understand their practices. It also became imperative for me to look into what SMTs understand by the concept of team-management underlying the SMT.

Taking a step backwards, during the apartheid era in South Africa, principals had their own way of administering and managing the schools. Their role was to ensure that the government policies were implemented and adhered to. As a result the principal was regarded as successful if s/he was a good administrator. Also principals were expected to manage their schools on their own, although the department made managerial decisions. Principals (being departmental officials at school level) were seen as solely accountable to the department for the departmental policies they had to adhere to, implement and monitor (DoE 1996a: 19). The Task Team Report (DoE 1996a: 19) further argues that:

> Principals and teachers have been on the receiving end of top-down management structures. They have worked in a regulated environment and have become accustomed to receiving direct instructions from the departmental official.

The fact that principals were accountable to the department made them autocratic, some perhaps not through choice, but acting under pressure from the authorities. That is the legacy that has left principals comfortable to be the 'bosses' and imposing their will onto the staff and learners. For that reason they viewed themselves as superiors and not partners with the rest of the staff.

Furthermore, before 1994, the education system of South Africa was characterised by a hierarchical and bureaucratic style of management. Education management in South Africa was hierarchical and top-down. Schooling was structured in a racial hierarchy where white schools were the key beneficiaries of resources and black schools the most disadvantaged. This was one of the factors that resulted in the death of a culture of teaching and learning in many urban and rural black schools. This is reiterated by the Task Team Report on educational management of 1996, which claims that "the legacy of apartheid in the field of education is well known: it has left the country with an education system that is characterised by fragmentation, inequity in provision…" (DoE 1996a: 10). The standard of black education was not in the interest of the apartheid government: it focussed on its political agenda.

There were many national departments of education. There was a national department for Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. The education head office was in Pretoria where decisions were taken and policies drafted. This top-down approach isolated decision-making processes and the ways in which schools were managed. Decision-making processes were clustered at the top of the hierarchy and were subsequently implemented at the bottom. According to Bush (1995:39) the "hierarchical approaches stress vertical relationships within organizations and the accountability of leaders to external sponsors". Of interest is that in the hierarchical style of management, the implementation of departmental policies is top-down but the accountability thereof is bottom-up.

This situation is not peculiar to South Africa. In Britain the local education authorities (LEAs) had been responsible for many aspects of school and college management (Bush 1995:5). Schools therefore became subjects of the LEAs in that they did not own themselves but were only implementing and monitoring the policies of the LEAs. In so doing schools did not promote the interests of the communities but promoted those of

the government. However research in England and Wales shows that the introduction of the education reform act (ERA) of 1998 and subsequent legislation have transformed the educational landscape, which is now very different from the pre–ERA scene. It gave governing bodies substantial discretion to manage their own schools and colleges, albeit within a framework of increased national control of the curriculum (Bush 1995:4). The management of schools has changed significantly since the inception of ERA. Blandford (1997:2) argues that all SMTs, nursery, primary, special and secondary schools, now have management responsibilities, which hitherto were in the domain of LEAs. The management of schools was a prerogative of the senior people in the educational echelons. Those people determined what was 'right' and what was 'wrong' for the people at the bottom. It became imperative that people get a structure that would be representative of the majority of the concerned and the SMTs were consequently established.

According to Wallace and Hall (1994: 10):

> The creation of SMTs has never been a central government policy; the label emerged during the early 1970s as new management structures developed in secondary schools after comprehensivisation where a larger number of senior staff were being appointed.

Schools stood up and announced what was best for them but the government did not welcome their self-emancipation. However, due to changing times, the demand for schools to be 'self reliant' was forcing its way.

In South Africa, the 1980s saw efforts to democratise management and administration of institutions through the establishment of student representative councils (SRCs) and parent-teacher-student association (PTSAs) (Unterhalter 1991:47). Although teacher associations such as the now extinct South African Teachers Association (SATA) ran effective workshops for school managers through the 70s and 80s, teachers from ex-DET schools would not have had access to these. This was largely due to the fact that membership bodies such as the SATA were racially determined.

Political democratisation of South Africa began with the first democratic elections in 1994. This process drove the democratisation of the education system. One of the

resultant changes was the collapsing of separate departments of education into one national department of education. This was a necessary step in attempting to bring about equality in a previously discriminatory system, and was perhaps the first move towards democratisation of education. Moreover, in line with this movement came the publication of the Task Team Report on Education Management Development in 1996, which heralded a new era in education management in South Africa. The report promotes a democratic approach where all the stakeholders participate fully in policy and in decision-making. Bush (1986: 48) argues that the democratic models include all those theories which emphasise that power and decision-making are shared among some or all members of the organisation. He further argues that agreement on aims is perhaps the key element in all participative approaches to school management. The Task Team Report (DoE 1996a: 6) argues for, "… an emphasis on relationship building, stakeholder participation, the management of diversity, and development". In its heart, the report promotes democratic governance and management of schools by the people who have the interest of its clientele at heart.

Another component of democracy is that of decentralised management. Our schools need to be conditioned in order to cope with that challenge. Writers such as Cheung and Cheng (1996) and Walker (1994) suggest that schools should be responsive to internal and external environment for real change to take place. In other words schools need to be transformed so that they are susceptible to change. Also schools are expected to be self-managing schools. According to the Education Department Manual on SMTs (DoE 2002:2):

> School-based management or self-managing schools are schools where decision-making processes, the crafting of a vision and mission of the school, the setting of the school ethos rest with the schools' stakeholders

It is now expected of the school communities to ensure that certain authority is devolved to the school level. The devolvement of authority to the school level and the placement of decision-making processes in schools reinforce school-based management. At the heart of the policy and legislative initiatives is a process of decentralising decision-making on the allocation of resources to school level, and a significant process of democratisation in the way in which schools are governed and

managed (DoE 1996a: 29). Schools are to be capacitated to deal with their affairs and to manage their resources without external assistance. Furthermore they are also expected to uphold and enhance the professional standard of the school as a whole. Such schools here in South Africa are to be granted a Section 21 status (a self managing status allocated to a school's governing body that has demonstrated a capacity to manage aspects of school's recurrent expenditure) (DoE 2002:1).

The democratisation of education also includes the idea that all stakeholders should be able to participate in the activities of the school. The school governing body makes decisions on behalf of the school and sees to it that the school is administered and managed properly. The Task Team Report (DoE 1996a: 15) asserts that the governance policy for public schools is based on the core values of democracy in which the democratic participation of schools' stakeholders is essential. The South African Schools' Act (SASA) adopted in 1996 also promotes democratic governance and management of schools.

The most recent development in terms of internal school management is the formation of school management teams. The implementation of SMTs signalled a radical departure from previous management approaches. The Education Human Resource Management and Development manual (DoE 2000b: 2) states that:

> The legislation does not define a SMT. The working definition being used by provinces and the national department is that the SMT consists of the following members: principal, deputy principal (if appointed) and the heads of departments.

SMTs comprise senior staff members. However, experience is the best teacher, hence additional members outside the school who have specific skills, knowledge and expertise can be co-opted to aid in the management of the school (DoE 2002:2).

The concept of SMT came as an alternative to the kind of management where decisions were taken by individuals from top management and imposed onto the subordinates. It sought to ensure that all stakeholders participate fully in the schools' activities. According to Bottery (1992: 163) "participation by teachers in school management is both their right and duty". And for Owens (2001:284) "participation is the mental and

emotional involvement of a person in a group situation that encourages the individual to contribute to group goals and to share responsibility for them". Participation is a democratic concept that invites people's involvement in issues pertaining to their well-being. Teachers are expected to make valuable contributions to the school and if they are left out they may want to distance themselves from those decisions.

There is little agreement on the membership and duties of SMTs. In a British context, Wallace and Hall (1994:47) argue that the largest SMT contained seven members, there being no direct relationship between the size of the school and the number of senior staff in the team. They further claim that the idea of an SMT was never a government policy. In Israel, Drach-Zahavy and Somech (2001:49) argue that seven to ten make up an optimal size for effectiveness. They see a correlation between the size of the SMT and the quality of decisions to be made by that SMT. In South Africa, the duties and roles of SMTs as separate entities are outlined in the Education Law and Policy Handbook (DoE 2000a: 3c-9-11). They range from managerial to educational. The size of each SMT depends on the size of the school and on the staff establishment (see Appendix A) as outlined by the department of education. As of now the staff establishment is as follows: for every seventh educator there must an HOD, and for every fourteenth educator there must be a deputy principal. This means that a school of, say, 15 educators will have 4 SMT members and a school of 42 educators will have 8 SMT members.

The Task Team Report (DoE 1996a: 15) is of the view that "the notion of a management team depends on management practices, which emphasise the devolution of power, mission building, human resource development and school effectiveness". SMTs need to align themselves with democratic principles such as participation, consultation and inclusion of relevant stakeholders. According to Hadderman (1988: 31):

> The management team concept, which developed in response to increasingly complex problems facing schools, is not only compatible with democratic concepts but also proved responsive to teacher and parent pressure to redistribute power, broaden decision-making, participation and improve administrative efficiency.

To Hadderman the fundamental element of management teams is to be flexible to the dynamics of the education system. This flexibility also ensures the extent to which the school is able to be responsive to internal as well as external circumstances. It also assures that all those involved have the right to share in the wider decision making.

However, democratic management has its limitations and shortcomings. According to Bush (1995:67) the democratic process "is time-consuming" because decisions should be reached by agreement, and before any decision is taken every stakeholder should be consulted. It is therefore not always feasible to consult every party when wanting to make a decision. There are some decisions that need to be taken on the spot and there are those that need to be taken after a broad consultation. Such decisions include issues that are policy orientated. Also democratic management is open to wide interpretations. He further argues that it is normative and tends to obscure rather than portray reality.

The idea of working together as a team to manage an institution has been generally accepted, but is largely untested in South Africa. The principles of democratic management are new and unfamiliar. There is no formal training for SMTs and their roles and functions are not clearly understood. The question is whether it will work in schools so used to top-down approaches. There is therefore a need for this research to find out how the concept is being received, and how the model is being implemented.

1.2 Research goal

The purpose of this study is to explore SMT members' experience and perceptions of team management, and hence their roles in managing their schools. Flowing from this, my sub-goals are to explore team effectiveness and the composition and general functioning of SMTs.

1.3 Research approach

Because my study involves people, I selected an approach that is most suitable for the interpretation and understanding of human experience. The data I will get from my respondents is in the form of words and not numbers – and hence qualitative. I

therefore conducted this study in the interpretive paradigm. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 19) in this paradigm "qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry". This approach focuses on what the respondents view as reality within their context. The reality is portrayed in the form of individual experiences.

1.4 The structure of this thesis

This thesis follows a logical sequence. In chapter one I have introduced this thesis by first giving the reason why I am doing this study. This is followed by a brief historical background to education management that led to the introduction of SMTs and the way they ought to operate. I then stated my research goals. I further highlighted the research approach I have taken.

In chapter two I present an overview of literature on teamwork and democratic management in national and international contexts.

In chapter three I start off with a general discussion of the research paradigm, followed by the discussion of the interpretive paradigm and justification of my using it. I then present my research participants and their profiles. I also discuss the research tools (i.e. questionnaires, interviews and observations) used. I further examine the concept of triangulation, ethical considerations, the data analysis and validity and reliability. Lastly I look at the realities I faced as I progressed with this research.

In chapter four I present data in the form of issues that emerged from the raw data.

In chapter five I discuss my findings in terms of issues identified in chapter four and in terms of the literature.

In chapter six I present a summary of the main findings. I also make recommendations for both future research and for practice. Lastly I critique my study.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

As argued in chapter one, management in schools was authoritarian and top down. This chapter explores the reasons why that kind of management style is no longer appropriate. An authoritarian style of management undermines the integrity and the creativity of teachers and that of the management at large. Moreover, we are now living in a democratic society where everybody has a right to air his/her views on whatever issue that concerns them. Therefore, this chapter seeks to unpack the arguments against the autocratic style of management and highlight the styles that, according to contemporary theory as well as policy, school managers should be seeking to practise and develop. I will thus discuss the following:

- What is a team?
- The difference between a team and a group;
- The importance of teams;
- Heterogeneity in teams;
- Team effectiveness
- Openness trust and participation in teams;
- Management of teams in education;
- Teamwork in high schools;
- Cooperation and competition;
- A common vision and a common goal;
- The composition of school management team (SMT);
- The roles of SMTs: problems and challenges
- The educational roles of SMTs
- The managerial roles of SMTs
- Democratic management
- Decentralised management
- Freedom and authority in schools
- Delegation, and
- The limitations and shortcomings of teams.

I conclude the chapter with a brief summary.

I focus on teams and teamwork as special features of democratic management. The phenomenon of the School Management Team (SMT) rests on the assumption that team management is preferable to forms of management where decision-making is the prerogative of the principal only. This assumption needs to be analysed.

2.1. What is a team?

Belbin (1981) and Hayes (1997) both argue that the term 'team' is derived from sport. They also claim that the rules and roles of players in sport apply to those of the team of an organisation. In an organisational context, "A team is a group of people actively co-operating to achieve the same goal or purpose" (Hayes 1997: 52). A team therefore is said to be active, in that all members are involved in the process of pursuing objectives.

Everard and Morris (1996: 156) define a team as "a group of people that can effectively tackle any task which it has been set to do". They further argue that the contribution drawn from each member is of the highest possible quality, and is one which could not have been called into play other than in the context of a supportive team. 'Effective' means that the quality of the task accomplishment is the best available and makes full and economic use of the resources (internal and external) available to them (*Ibid.:* 156). Van der Bank (2000:9) claims that effectiveness means, "Doing the right job right". Van der Bank's definition suggests that if a team is set and its tasks are specified and the team does something that it is not mandated to do, although correct, that team is not effective. And hence Shea and Guzzo (in Drach-Zahavy and Somech 2001:52) define team effectiveness as the "production of designated products or the delivery of services per specification".

According to Wallace and Hall (1994:3) a team has:

> …Two or more people; it has a specific performance or recognisable goal to be attained; and coordination of activity among the members of the team is required for the attainment of the team goal or objective.

Following Wallace and Hall's definition of a team depicts two things, the number of people constituting the team and their designation. From this definition one can deduce that when more than one person has a joint role to play, they constitute a team.

Wallace and Hall are of the view that in order for people to be committed in their endeavours to produce good results they must be in teams. Teams are an effective way of making people productive when they work together (Sheard and Kakabadse 2001:133). Sheard and Kakabadse are deliberately isolating a team from a collection of

people to carry out a task. This collection or group of people might have different interests and subsequently not coordinate their activities. It becomes clear that there may be disparity between teams and groups. I now explore the difference briefly.

2.1.1 The difference between a team and a group

A team is "…a group of people who are task focused, co-ordinated, each contributing their own personal talents and abilities and energies to the job in hand" (Hayes 1997:28). Hayes sees a team as people having a vision and working on a task with enthusiasm and determination. He assumes that people in a team will utilise their skills and capabilities to achieve a common goal.

Sheard and Kakabadse (2001) argue that a group is loose. A loose group is defined as a number of individuals brought together to achieve a task, but with no further development undertaken (*ibid*: 133). By 'loose' they mean that people in that group do not work in a co-ordinated manner and have different interests. Therefore it is likely that in a group people might pull in different directions. According to Hayes (1997:28) a group is "A group of people working together - amicably enough, but without co-ordination, common objectives and a sense of teamwork".

According to Mears and Voehl (1994:82), the fundamental difference between a team and a group is that

> A group is a collection of individuals who are in an interdependence relationship with one another. A team goes beyond that, in that members are encouraged to share in the ownership of the team's functions and direction.

However, recently the father of team-role theory (Belbin 2000:114) argued that there are six distinct differences between a team and a group namely: size, selection, leadership, perception, style and spirit. I discuss them in detail later in this chapter.

Belbin (1981:135) claims that

> The essence of a team is that its members form a co-operative association through a division of labour that best reflects the contribution that each can make towards the common objective.

From the above statement it is evident that each team member is expected to contribute equally towards a specified goal. The amount of work to be done should be negotiated with the rest of the team and each member takes up a portion of it.

As has become apparent, there is a thin line of demarcation between a team and a group. In order for one to know and understand their ways of functioning it is vital for one to distinguish between the two. Belbin (1981:140) acknowledges that there is a discrepancy between a team and a group, as a point of departure he starts the difference on a personal perspective and states that, "A team differs from a group in that it demands from its members personal adjustment in playing one of a limited number of parts that together form an effective pattern" .

He goes on to the numerical values of the two and says

> A group refers to a number of people brought together for a common purpose while being too numerous to allow team role relationship to form. As numbers in the group increase, the identity and special role contribution of every individual member diminishes and correspondingly the role of the leader becomes enlarged (*ibid*: 114).

In a later publication Belbin (2000:114) argues, "A team comprises a limited number of people selected to work together for a shared objective in a way that allows each person to make a distinctive contribution". Furthermore Belbin (2000:17) states that leadership and style in a group and in a team is different in that:

> In a team leadership is shared or rotates. In groups the leadership stays unchanged in spite of changing focus of the work, for solo leaders are not easily challenged or displaced. Solo leaders impose their own particular style and preferences on others.

According to Belbin (2000:21) it is evident that "…teams were more productive than groups and had developed a useful language of inputs designed to facilitate the working relationships of team members…" From the above it can be argued that for teams to be

productive, they must be democratic in their practices. Belbin (2000:114) offers us the comprehensive differentiation between a team and a group.

Six differences between a team and a group - Adapted from Belbin (2000: fig.3)

	TEAM	**GROUP**
SIZE	LIMITED	MEDIUM or LARGE
SELECTION	CRUCIAL	IMMATERIAL
LEADERSHIP	SHARED OR ROTATING	SOLO
PERCEPTION	MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE UNDERSTANDING	FOCUS ON LEADER
STYLE	ROLE-SPREAD CO - ORDINATION	CONVERGENCE
SPIRIT	DYNAMIC INTERACTION	CONFORMISM

It is thus evident that teams are more inclusive and 'democratic' than groups. Research has shown that the team concept is preferred to individualism and working in isolation (Belbin 1981, Wallace and Hall 1994 and Hayes 1997). It is appropriate that I now discuss ways in which teams are important.

2.1.2 The importance of teams

Hartshorne and Garaudy (1999: 105-6) postulate that:

> South Africa inherited a state education system from the apartheid era that was not only divisive and discriminatory, but also ineffective and inefficient, with a particular low level of morale among the teachers in the system and a poor standard of management performance.

The poor standard of management highlighted by Hartshorne and Garaudy is a result of the lack of a legitimate management structure that is able to listen to other people's needs. I mean 'legitimate' in the sense that that structure should be able to make fundamental decisions with regards to the ways in which they can manage their schools within a given ambit. The structures have legal and moral authority to make these decisions. Furthermore, the argument is informed by the fact that within a school

situation, there was no consultation in as far as managerial imperatives are concerned as already discussed.

However, the Task Team Report (DoE 1996a: 14) argues that:

> Managers can no longer simply wait for instructions or decisions from government. The pace of change and the need to be adaptable and responsive to local circumstances requires that managers develop new skills and styles of working. They must be capable of providing leadership for teams, and able to interact with communities and stakeholders both inside and outside the system.

It is these new skills and styles of working that make education so dynamic. However, to change the above scenario around, there should be a way of involving more than one person in managing the school. This should be done with good results and relationships in mind. Hence I find that Sheard and Kakabadse's (2001:134) definition of a team above is still relevant and indisputable in this context. Murgatroyd and Morgan in Van der Bank (2000: 9) assert that teams are desirable in schools because:

> They maximize the creative talent within the school and promote learning
> They are learning units because they encourage the transfer of knowledge as well as skills
> Teamwork is more satisfying than working alone (teams must however be well managed, trained and developed)
> Teams promote problem ownership
> Teams can cover a wider range of problem solving than a single individual could cope with.

The above quote, to me, summarises what an effective team should be doing. In one sentence, therefore, I could define teamwork as a way in which teams' potentials and capabilities are utilised, nurtured and optimised. I say this because I believe that when your skills are being used, they become 'sharper' in that they will be given enough exercise and evaluation throughout. In so doing adjustments could be made in order to have them (skills) functioning to their maximum.

The way teams are composed is very important because it determines the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the team. I want to pay special attention to heterogeneity in teams to find out how effectively different heterogeneous teams work.

2.1.3 Heterogeneity in teams

Drach-Zahavy and Somech (2001:44) suggest that for the team to be effective it must be highly heterogeneous (in terms of functionality, education and team tenure). They see the diversity in teams as the driving force for the achievement of results; this is because people from different backgrounds bring with them different experiences and different knowledge bases. Team members' varied exposures enable them to approach a task from different angles and thereby solve problems amicably. Maier (in Drach-Zahavy and Somech 2001:45) similarly argues, "…Team heterogeneity enhances the breadth of perspective, cognitive resources, and overall problem–solving capacity of the group". Heterogeneity refers to "a greater mix of educational backgrounds of team members" (Drach-Zahavy and Somech 2000:46). Mears and Voehl (1994:80) reiterate that "Sound teamwork is based upon an effective mix of people, and each person should realize the unique contribution he/ she can make to the team".

The notion of heterogeneity is, however, not as simple as it seems. Belbin (1981: 20) asserts, "…The deliberate creation of homogeneity in a management team has the effect of unbalancing the occupational breakdown of the teams we compose". He is of the view that it is common understanding and background that make team members work in harmony. Fundamental to this assumption is what Belbin (1981: 19) calls "the principle of elective homogeneity". In a nutshell, Belbin suggests that the way we create our heterogeneous teams is influenced by a certain commonality we see in the individual members (that is, we are actually looking for similar features in those individuals). He further claims that "…managers recruit in their own image"(*ibid:* 20). They try to find copies of themselves to make up a team. This may be a dangerous tendency, since it may reduce heterogeneity and could lead to a team composed of a group of people who all think the same.

On the other hand Musaazi (1982:54) argues for homogeneity, "…the degree to which the members are similar in age, sex, culture and background". He believes that homogeneous teams are created according to fixed criteria. There must be some

commonality on the part of the individuals and they must have similar interests and experiences. Bush (1986:49) argues

> The common background and education of participants form part of the justification for the normative assumption that it is always possible to reach agreement about goals policies.

In a South African school context true heterogeneity would be difficult to accomplish at this stage, particularly if one includes the criteria of culture and language. This is because, despite the democratic environment schools are operating under, some schools still seem to employ teachers on the basis of their ethnicity. This ensures that only a particular race group is dominant in a particular school, and leads to lack of cultural diversity in the composition of teams in schools. The teams investigated in this study are indeed non-heterogeneous in this sense.

I now turn to what is meant by team effectiveness.

2.1.4 Team effectiveness

Many writers - such as Everard and Morris (1996:156), Van der bank (2000:9), Shea and Guzzo in Drach-Zahavy and Somech (2001:52), Sheard and Kakabadse (2001:133) and Scott and Walker (1999:55) - associate the team concept with effectiveness. They are of the view that if people work as a team surely they are capable of producing fruitful results. According to the Education Department Manual on SMTs (DoE 2000a: 26), teams that produce good results usually have:

> A common purpose
> Clearly defined roles for each team member
> A leader
> Team members that support one another
> A free flow of information
> Set ways for resolving conflict
> Members who can see benefits in working together

A quality perhaps lacking in this list is that of creativity. Mears and Voehl (1994:80) argue that “an effective team needs to be both creative and empirical.”

Belbin (1981:126-7) argues:

> The effectiveness of a team will be promoted by the extent to which members correctly recognize and adjust themselves to the relative strengths within a team, both in expertise and ability, to engage in specific team-roles.

Belbin here maintains that two heads are better than one, and that team members must recognise their capabilities and their specific roles in the team. I think the premise from which to move therefore, from a team point of view, is to strive for cooperation and sharing of ideas. Belbin perceives the level of 'readiness' of the team members to take responsibility as being of utmost importance. Furthermore, an effective team is the one in which development of a supportive social structure has occurred, with each individual adapting his/her behaviour to optimise his/her personal contribution to the team (Sheard and Kakabadse 2001:133). Scarr *et al.* in Drach-Zahavy and Somech (2001:44) assert that there is a "…belief that teamwork offers the potential to achieve outcomes that could not be achieved by individuals working in isolation". Togetherness is a key feature, according to Wallace and Hall (1994:53): "Team is as team does. If you are not together then you can't pretend to be a team".

According to the Task Team Report (DoE 1996a: 37), effectiveness of a team is "achieving the objectives of the school, institution or education system". Hence the team strives for the accomplishment of the set goals.

For the teams to be effective Mears and Voehl (1994:8) argue "among other things, a team requires a high level of trust, an open climate for communication, and shared decision making". For Mears and Voehl it is advisable that team members must establish rapport amongst themselves. This is developed in the next section.

2.1.5 Openness, trust and participation in teams

Walker (1994:40) argues that:

> For teamwork to be successful the culture of the school must be based on the fundamental values of openness, trust, and participation. It would

> be a futile exercise to implement a team structure in a school that fostered secrecy and suspicion.

I fully agree with Walker because in a team situation, one is expected to share his/her views and feelings with the rest of the team. One must feel that s/he is part of a team and that s/he is obliged to participate. I also think that you cannot be an effective team if some members are taking a back seat or hiding valuable information that could take the team a step further. Moreover, if someone has been selected as a team member, his/her contribution is of the utmost importance. On that score Mears and Voehl (1994: 8) warn, "Amongst other things, a team requires a high level of trust, an open climate for communication, and shared decision making." There is also a need for the organisation to foster teamwork and make it organisationally possible and desirable. According to Scott and Walker (1999:51) "If teamwork is to be encouraged, organisational strategies should support teamwork and should make individual endeavour - in certain circumstances - less welcome".

The notion of responsibility also emerges as a driving force for teamwork. Clearly if a team is formed, it has a responsibility to serve the organisation or a school. Belbin (2000:22) suggests that responsibility:

> Refers to the sense of moral responsibility
> Denotes a span of control
> Signifies being accountable for an action.

It becomes evident that the way in which one creates a team will influence the way they are going to operate. Therefore, the selection of management teams in our education system needs scrutiny.

2.1.6 Management of teams in education

The Education Human Resource Management and Development Manual (DoE 2000a: 15) argues that:

> In the past, many South African leaders, including educational leaders, have been authoritarian. They made decisions without consultation and school level leaders did not allow staff and learners to openly disagree

> with them. As a result, members of the school community often did not feel that the school belonged to them; or they did not feel committed to the decisions that the leaders made.

The above quotation summarises the apartheid management legacy in the South African education system. Its bureaucratic nature was designed to privilege some sectors of the community and disadvantage others. Moreover it made teachers see themselves as unfit to manage their own schools. This is because they did not have channels through which to communicate how they would like to manage their schools. This was due to fact that "Principals worked in an environment which was closely regulated and were used to receiving and giving instructions" (DoE 2000b: 1). The concept of teamwork is a potentially powerful answer to the contexts in which most schools have found themselves over the past decade since independence.

In line with Hadderman's (1988: 31) assertion, cited on page 6, it can be argued that management teams in general and SMTs in particular are some sort of an answer or an alternative to the kind of leadership and management problems the principals used to face. In South Africa teamwork is more than simply sharing the load; or that the principals do "…not carry the burden of running the school alone (DoE 2000a: 2). The notion of teams deliberately agitates against the politically and morally impoverished structures of the past, and is thus always also a social issue.

However, the argument for teamwork as a means to greater effectiveness cannot be ignored. Erickson and Gmelch (1997:189) argue that:

> The team management concept is perhaps one of the most widely endorsed concepts in school administration today. Shifts in power, pressure on individual administrators, and the desire for organisational improvement have all led educational administrators to look to the management team as a means of solving their problems.

The assumption is that team management can be relied upon in terms of improving the working relations and self-determination of both teachers and learners. Writers such as Wallace and Hall (1994) and Hayes (1997) see team management as a cornerstone for effective management in schools. The question of how teamwork manifests itself in schools now deserves attention.

2.2. Teamwork in high schools

The team concept in South Africa has been enacted in government policy. “The South Africa Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) emphasises collaboration and collective decision-making between schools stakeholders” (DoE 2000b: 1). The SASA promotes the notion of staff working as a team which constantly reflects on what it is doing (being a ‘learning network’)” (*Ibid: 7*). It also stipulates that, “It is therefore crucial that staff start operating as a team – classroom teams, SMT, fundraising teams etc.”(*Ibid: 7*). From the above policy it is evident that the team concept is seen to have the potential of uplifting the standard of work teachers undertake. The essence of the policy is togetherness in whatever activity the teachers embark on; be it managerial, teaching, or even extra-curricular. Therefore the present government is seeing the need for the whole staff to unite in their endeavours to enhance the standard of education.

In trying to define teamwork DoE (2000b: 7) states that, “Teamwork is the ‘thread’ through all systems in an effective school. It helps school stakeholders to work more closely”. By ‘thread’ I think, the manual means that there should be a ‘link’ between all stakeholders and that they must play a part in ensuring effective schooling. By ‘systems’ it means all the processes that take place in school, that is, teaching and learning, governance and management. It suggests that forming teams in all those spheres will facilitate the smooth running of the school.

When we look at the amount of work to be done, and the way in which it should be divided, Hayes (1997:2) argues:

> Teamworking is all about passing the responsibility over to working teams, so that they can get on with what they have to do without continually having to refer to higher levels in their organisations.

In essence, Hayes means that certain powers and responsibilities about the work to be done have to be delegated to the team in order to speed up the working process. Again it is unlikely that the team concept will be easily adapted in South African schools, and adapted to circumstances. Earlier I argued that school administrators (and teachers)

would probably have developed a mindset that would work against teamwork, particularly the ideals of decentralisation and delegation referred to above.

Secondary schools are of course ideal organisations for team management. Schools have many distinct areas of endeavour and interest, all of which add up to make a complex and challenging organisation. When one considers that aspects such as curriculum, finance, extra-mural activities, administration, marketing, examinations (and many others) all need management and also need to blend into a whole coherent effort the appropriateness of teamwork becomes apparent.

But for delegation to be effective the team needs to cooperate fully. Thus I would like to distinguish between cooperation and competition in teams.

2.2.1 Cooperation and competition

According to Scott and Walker (1999:55) for teams to operate effectively the organisation needs to emphasise cooperation rather than competition. This means that team members need not compete in their practices but be more supportive and persuasive of other members in trying to reach a common goal or consensus. On the other hand there is of course room for healthy competition, as Belbin (2000:74) argues: "competition is healthy; it leads to progress; it operates in the public interest".

Hayes (1997: 199) argues that:

> Appraisal systems which put the team members in competition with one another, or which fail to recognise the achievements of the team as a whole, undermine the co-operative dimensions of teamwork and can be extremely demoralizing to team members.

It becomes clear that competition is ambivalent: it can be negative or positive. Whatever kind of competition team members embark themselves on, one kind should compensate the other, rather than paralysing the organisation. Thus Hayes (1997: 214) suggests, "Competition between teams has to be carefully managed so as to ensure that it is competition about achievement rather than competition about organizational resources". In an organisation it is healthy for the members to have conflicting ideas

and strive towards their adoption. This is line with Bush's (1995) political model of organisation. Bush (1995:73) asserts, "Conflict is viewed as a natural phenomenon…" Here members can compete for their views to be adopted. But it is obvious that for positive competition to prevail, the teams must share a common vision and goal.

2.2.2 A common vision and a common goal

Bush (1986:49) argues:

> Democratic models assume a common set of values held by members of the organization. These may arise from socialization which occurs during training and the early years of professional practice. These common values guide the managerial activities of the organization and in particular are thought to lead to shared institutional objectives.

"A vision is a blueprint for change. It must be dreamed and imagined before it is achieved" (DoE 2002:79). This suggests that all school stakeholders and other people who are interested in the education of learners should be given an opportunity to voice their aspirations and expectations. A school vision therefore has the capacity of changing the status quo of an institution including its management practices.

Senge (in Wallace 1996:3) defines a vision as

> a mental image of the future state of an organization that we hope to create. Vision building is both individual and a group enterprise. A common vision begins with the vision of each individual involved.

Thus a common vision has its roots in a personal 'dream'. Coetzee *et al.* (2001:12) elaborate on a personal vision:

> A vision is a picture in your mind. To visualise is to see this picture. Your personal vision for the future is a picture you create in your mind of what you want your life to be like, almost like your dreams for the future.

All in all, a vision is the ambition and expectation of all stakeholders. It gives a broader picture of what you want to achieve at the end of the day. A vision is also a long-term phenomenon.

Hayes (1997:187) suggests that a vision:

> Must be clearly articulated
> Must be original
> Must be developed and negotiated by the whole team
> Must be attainable.

Let me analyse these points one by one. “Must be clearly articulated” means that the vision must be written in a language that is clear and simple, using words which carry special meaning to all members. The vision “Must be original” meaning that an organisation needs to develop its own vision, one which reflects members’ own aspirations and the context in which they work. It should be *patriotic* in nature. In my home language (Xhosa) it must be ‘of the soil’ (*owomgquba / owomthonyama*) emphasising that a vision must be representative of the people it is meant to serve. Therefore voices of the stakeholders must feature prominently in the vision.

The third point is self-explanatory and it states that a vision must be developed and negotiated by the whole team. All stakeholders need to be part of the crafting of the vision of their school so that they can identify with the school and vision itself. One of the facilitators of the workshop discussed later (p28), said: “When your school’s name is being called – no matter where you are, you must turn around and look back because that school has became part of you”.

Lastly, the vision must be “attainable”. Although a vision must be ‘dreamed’, Hayes suggests that it should be an achievable dream. Let us take an example of a very poorly resourced school in a rural area where teaching and learning takes place under a tree. Hayes suggests that they must not dream of having a school computer laboratory instead of thinking about the shelter first. To me, therefore, a vision must be a priority the school community needs to achieve in their endeavours to uplift themselves.

If we can take Bell's definition of teamwork referred to earlier, it suggests that the team understands each other, has a common vision, and is working towards a common goal. For the team to achieve the above-mentioned points, each member should realise that their contributions are fundamental and that the rest of the team depends on the individual. At this juncture I wish to bring in Belbin's metaphor of a team as a game. He says:

> The term 'team' is imbued with a meaning derived, in the first instance, from games. Each player in a team has a position and a specific responsibility. The skills of the players are important, but the strength of the team depends more especially on how well the players combine. Star players who fail to pass the ball are no longer an asset and may be dropped in favour of those who fit in best (Belbin 1993:87).

In a school situation Belbin's metaphor is in line with Bell's definition of teamwork. However, Belbin's argument goes a step further and suggests what to do when you have a non-performing team member. He suggests that if one member is not performing as expected, then that member is no longer part of the team. He further warns "…while teams should be changed due to poor results, there are also occasions when teams need to be changed in advance of likely failure" (*ibid*: 93). He suggests that leaders should anticipate that there is a likelihood of team members not to clique and make necessary arrangements accordingly.

This is a vital step towards achieving a common goal. However, Hayes (1997:56) argues, "Common goals cannot be taken for granted". What he means here is that common goals need to be negotiated and co-determined by team members; more importantly, they need to be consolidated before "…a team is built or acting 'fully as a team'" (*Ibid:* 56). The above argument reiterates the notion that teams are built for a purpose or a goal. Therefore teams determine their common goals by "…creating conditions in which people will begin to perceive the team members as 'us'- as belonging to the same unit and identifying with it" (Hayes 1997: 56).

Among the 'conditions' are dialogue and personal commitment. Wallace (1996:12) argues

> The process of shared vision has two important elements: It requires extensive dialogue between the key stakeholders to agree on a statement of belief about the desired future state of the school district and individual schools and it requires each participant to think seriously about personal beliefs regarding knowledge, learning, teaching, assessment, and the like.

Most importantly, the team, especially the school management team (SMT), should understand and identify with the vision in order to establish rapport among the school's stakeholders. The vision of the school should be initiated by the SMT and spread to the rest of the stakeholders. The school needs to have a SMT that is ambitious and creative. To have that kind of a SMT, its composition should be carefully constructed. The working SMT should be part (especially taking the leading role) of vision crafting and the composition of the SMT should therefore be a priority.

2.2.3 The composition of school management teams (SMTs)

As argued earlier, teams must not be formed by chance. Walker (1994:39), commenting on a research project, laments: "Teachers were formed into teams without thought of composition, structure or accountability". The end result of this approach would be ineffectiveness and in acute cases dysfunctional teams. I mean ineffective and dysfunctional in the sense that due to inappropriate combination of team members, they find themselves not pulling together, and therefore only certain members of the team are doing the job. Sheard and Kakabadse (2001:137) assert that "the team may be apparently functional, but some individuals have no intention of accepting any decision that involves them personally doing anything differently".

Research in Israel found that the number seven to ten is an optimal size for obtaining effectiveness (Drach-Zahavy and Somech 2001:49). They further argue, "Team size was found to affect effectiveness through its effects on team structure as well as on team processes". Mears and Voehl (1994:7) also contend that "in practice, effective teams are actually small, with the ideal team size between six and seven people on the average." Belbin (1981:107) on the other hand argues for flexibility in the number of team members and to him the number of team members "…depends on the amount of work that needs to be performed". He suggests that the number or the size of SMT

members is dictated by the tasks that the SMT is to perform. As mentioned on page 5, Wallace and Hall (1994:47) argue that there is "no direct relationship between the size of the school and the number of senior staff in the team". The Education Human Resource Management and Development Manual (DoE 2000b: 2) is equally vague about the composition of SMTs, as discussed on page 5.

According to the manual the SMT is a structure that is composed of the higher-ranking educators in an institution. Belbin (1981: 126) reiterates, "Management teams are commonly made up of members holding particular appointments. They are there by virtue of the offices or responsibilities they represent". From the above statement I wish to deduce that when a teacher applies for a head of department (HOD), or deputy principal or the principal posts, s/he is applying for a management post. Therefore, in schools, one cannot divorce a particular higher post from any managerial functions attached to it.

As has been mentioned, in order for the SMT to function effectively, it must have clearly defined roles and duties, and I now turn to these.

2.2.4 The roles of the SMT - problems and challenges

"A role can be defined as a set of integrated behaviours associated with an identifiable position" (Sergiovanni *et al.*1999: 169). They view a role as having a relation to the position of a person to play that role. This means therefore that the role a particular person is to undertake is, in a way, influenced by his/her position. However, there is little agreement on the issue of SMT members' roles and duties both local and abroad. Research in Britain has shown that "…it is evident that many heads and senior staff are inadequately prepared for their new responsibilities" (Bush 1995:5). I think that amongst the responsibilities Bush is mentioning, the roles and duties of the SMT are part of it. Similarly in a South African context, Lukhwareni (1995) argues:

> School management teams must be made aware of their roles and that they are responsible for the fates of their respective schools and the people associated with them. Being aware of their roles, they must unflinchingly accept the obligation to take the lead in performing them with dedication… It became clear that most school management team

> members are not aware of their roles, and lack of in-service training for team members before or after assuming promotion posts was cited as one important factor.

Lukhwareni here emphasises the fact that SMT members are not familiar with their roles and he provides an answer for the malfunctioning of the SMTs in managing schools. He cites the lack of training of prospective managers as one of the key factors. He also claims that the absence of proper support from the department of education is a key factor for the oblivion the SMTs find themselves in. It becomes evident to me that SMTs need intensive training in school management. The department of education needs to conduct regular workshops and seminars to keep SMT abreast of their roles and functions. Furthermore he points out that without guidance and support from the department, the SMT members are lost.

In the same vein, Scott and Walker (1999: 50) argue

> Without the right support, it is argued that teamwork can be little more than a token form of democracy, and if schools are to optimise their use of teams, they must face up to some of the inconsistencies evident in their structures, systems and processes.
>
> It is human nature that people do not know all. Therefore, from the argument above it becomes apparent that for SMTs to function more effectively, support from the department of education should be an imperative.

The Education Human Resource Management and Development Manual (DoE 2000a: 2) argues that:

> The new education policy requires school leaders and managers to work in democratic and participatory ways to build relationships and ensure efficient and effective delivery, but many school leaders and managers are struggling to translate policy into practice.

Firstly, I should think, in this case “school leaders” mean the SMTs. And the manual expects them (school leaders) to know their roles and functions in school management in order to facilitate effective delivery. Secondly, by being leaders they must be at the forefront of school activities and initiate new ways of doing things. This reminds me of a workshop I attended on vision crafting (held on the 25 February 2003 at a local

school). I was co-opted by my principal to be present on the basis that I had attended a similar workshop the previous year on the School Development Plan (SDP). One of the facilitators said school leaders must not be afraid to make mistakes in their endeavours to explore. He was of the view that leaders need to experiment and try out new things and ideas and in that process they make mistakes that, according to him, are acceptable. However, he warned that it must not be the tendency of leaders to make mistakes! This attitude signifies an open-ness to experimentation and even failure, crucial components of teamwork.

However, to be able to try new things, the SMT members must be conversant with their roles and be committed to carrying them out, as I have mentioned. It is also salutary to remember that SMT members are teachers, and have probably received more training as teachers than as managers. It becomes evident that the roles of the SMT can be both educational and managerial and I discuss them in that order.

2.2.5 The educational roles of SMT

The manuals on education management development referred to above are also vocal about the roles of the SMT. One of the manuals stipulates that the roles of the SMTs are to:

> Organise activities that support teaching and learning
> Administer teaching and learning (DoE 2000a: 3).

The above roles are concerned mainly with everyday activities of the school and are therefore educational. The manual continues:

> The SMT is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school and for putting the school's policies into practice, while the school governing body (SGB) determines the policies *(Ibid:* 2).

The above point makes a clear distinction between the roles of the SMT and the responsibilities of the SGB. The day-to-day running of the school requires professionalism (which the teachers have) and the determining of school policies in ensuring quality education is inspirational and vision-led (the terrain of the SGB). Parents are seen to be in a better position to determine the future of their children and to

dictate the ethos of the school. Hence the teaching of learners and the way in which school is run remains in the job description of the teachers. Sithole (1998: 106) also emphasises this point:

> School management is responsible for the management of the day-to-day administration … of the school by ensuring effective teaching and learning, and the efficient use of the school's human and material resources.

This may be argues to be an impoverished view of school management, since it is suggested that SMTs work only within the domain of internal school functioning. However, Louis *et al* (in Blase and Blase 1999:130) argue

> In recent years, the restructuring of schools to empower teachers and to implement school-based shared decision-making has resulted in a move away from bureaucratic control and toward professionalisation of teaching.

They are of the opinion that the democratisation of the education system is the key to the transformation of the whole education fraternity. They envisage democracy as an instrument to restore the dignity and professionalism of teachers because it gives them (teachers) more power and control. By professionalisation they acknowledge that teachers have specialised jobs to undertake. Moreover Blase and Blase (1999:130) argue that teachers are "professionals who provide academic and moral services to students". They remind us here that apart from academic duties a teacher had to perform, they also instil moral values in learners. In school management they also view teachers as parents and guardians. Teachers are said to act *in loco parentis.*

Wallace and Hall (1994:57) share the same sentiments and state that, "The basic aim of management team is to maximise the potential of students and staff". First and foremost the SMT need to see to it that there is effective tuition in the school. However it is not enough for the SMTs to enhance one dimension of the students and staff, for example, feeding their minds only; they need to uplift them in their totality (i.e. both mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally). To achieve that, school management would need to change the ways in which they manage schools and be responsive and adaptive to the dynamics of education.

2.2.6 The managerial roles of the SMT

It has been argued that SMTs have more than one role to play in schools. Apart from ensuring 'academic excellence' they become the leaders of the school and initiate programmes that will enhance the standard of the entire school community. The SMT is expected to generate ideas and see to it that the school is vision-led. Thus The Education Human Resource Management and Development Manual (DoE 2000b: 10) argues, "it is the role of the SMT to work out how the school can be organised best to bring about the vision of the school community". The above role is managerial in that the SMT will constantly plan, implement and monitor the observance of and adherence to the school vision. Consequent to that co-operation, the SMT is said to have managed the whole process.

Wallace and Hall (1994:57) argue:

> The management role of the teams was complex because it was in no sense exclusive: it was linked through individual SMT members' responsibilities and through communication structures to staff with middle-management responsibilities (such as heads of faculty or heads of year) and to the rest of the teaching and support staff.

Wallace and Hall here emphasise the fact that educational and managerial roles of the SMT overlap and therefore are inseparable and they operate side by side.

Sergiovanni *et al.* (1999:72) elaborates and states, "Management roles, though critically important, are not central. Indeed, they exist only to complement educational roles". This will be accomplished mostly in a democratic style of management, the focus of the next section.

2.3. Democratic management

Since team management finds its conceptual home in management approaches loosely termed 'democratic', it becomes appropriate to examine democratic management more closely.

Morrow (1989:28) claims that the word democracy is highly political and therefore goes hand in glove with power and the politics of the day. I also believe that the way in which one defines democracy is influenced, in some way, by politics. Parry and Moyser in Beetham (1994:44) argue that democracy meant originally the 'rule' or 'power' of 'the people'. Parry and Moyser further postulate that in any attempt to measure the extent of democracy, the degree of popular political participation must constitute one of the indices. Beetham (1994:44) suggests that … "democracy, as the 'power' of the people has to be attenuated to 'rule' of the people". In South Africa, political democratisation began with the first democratic elections in 1994.

Benn and Peters in Morrow (1989:115) postulate, "Democracy is often used nowadays in an extended sense, to cover other things besides forms of government…" Morrow (1989:115) further argues that "…as soon as we think of 'democracy' as (primarily) a 'form of government' or a 'political system' we are on the way to thinking of education and democracy as, at best, only contingently, or externally, linked to each other". He also claims that:

> Education cannot itself be 'democratic' because those who are not yet educated do not yet possess capacities and abilities; in particular those related to rationality, which are a prerequisite for participation (*ibid*: 115).

Morrow emphasises education and rationality of decision makers. He claims that educated people will be more eligible and suitable to participate in any decision-making structures because they can make informed decisions. That is why representative councils of learners (RCLs) are prohibited in primary schools - those learners are not yet ready to make correct judgements, and also why the question of the role of RCLs in secondary schools is so problematic (Nongubo 2004). The fact some of the schools' stakeholders (parents for example) might be illiterate, does not mean they are incompetent in identifying what is right for their children's future and how best they can improve their children's education. On that score, Higgs *et al.* (2000:9) argue that:

> Democratization of education as a political project to build up a democratic society very much depends on the degree of participation of the members of the society in the decision-making process.

From this point of view when one talks about democratisation of education, it is necessary not to discriminate against people. It would be axiomatic that if you discriminate against people, you are marginalising their degree of participation. In a nutshell one cannot talk of democracy whilst the majority of people have no contribution in making critical decisions. Having said that though, it is accepted that people be represented in the decision-making structures if that arrangement suits them. This, in some cases, is due to the level of 'organisation' literacy in that organisation. Therefore the move towards democratisation in South Africa is in line with the developments worldwide. Bush (1995:52) asserts that democratic or "collegial models include all those theories that emphasize that power and decision-making are shared amongst some or all members of the organisation**".**

Hartshorne (1992:343) argues that:

> It was decided to adopt the approach that management was the philosophy and practice of decision making, with all the influences brought to bear upon this process by participatory, consultative and negotiating procedures, and the relevance and effectiveness of the information and plans available to the decision-making bodies.

The decision-making bodies are all the schools' stakeholders. The democratisation of education includes the idea that all stakeholders should be able to participate in the activities of the school. The said activities include decision-making, governance and resource allocation. Having said that though, people in an organisation can participate at different levels according to their levels of expertise. Bottery (1992:165) distinguishes three different levels of participation, namely:

> Pseudo-participation (where no real decision-making is allowed),
> Partial participation (where equality of decision-making is not allowed, but influence is)
> Full participation (where there is equality of decision making).

Bottery (1992) suggests that members of any organisation need to participate fully in taking decisions that will affect all stakeholders. Full participation will make the stakeholders own those decisions and abide by them. In so doing, people adopt an 'all sink or all swim' approach in that they will enjoy the successes together and accept their failures gracefully. The Task Team Report (DoE 1996:27) argues that

"management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage".

According to Owens (2001:284):

> Participation is defined as the mental and emotional involvement of a person in a group situation that encourages the individual to contribute to group goals and to share responsibility for them.

Owens emphasises involvement and contribution towards a group goal. In his point of view participation is also a moral act.

Morrow (1989:110) denotes two notions of participation, namely:

> A kind of negotiation mechanism or bargaining process. Here one can talk of the right of people to participate in decisions, which affect their lives … [and] a kind of participation where all rights presuppose human community

In most cases, democratic management and effectiveness are used synonymously, i.e. if a school's style of management is democratic it is taken for granted that the school will also be effective. This is problematic because that is not a cut and dried situation. School effectiveness may be as a result of many factors and not management alone. However, in a democratic environment it is anticipated that people work together towards a common goal and for a common good. Nowadays, more often than not, in schools where there is a shared vision, responsibility and decision-making, the school is said to be more effective. This is because all stakeholders must have made a valuable contribution to the activities of the school. Scott and Walker (1999: 52) emphasise this point:

> If we believe that democratic management is the path to effectiveness, such belief is consistent with an attraction to collaboration and co-operation as opposed to competition and isolation, and it is almost universally unchallenged.

Bush (1986) is also of the view that in democratic management all have equal voices in determining policy. Democratic management assumes that all members have the right to share in the wider decision-making process.

In other words, democratisation of management in education suggests that management processes, such as decision making, must be decentralised. Decentralisation is another component of democratic management.

2.3.1 Decentralised management

As has been pointed out, the apartheid regime in South Africa imposed a system of education where the schools did not have authority and power to control and manage themselves. This resulted in their serving the needs of the department and not those of the community. Power and authority were clustered in the departmental officials and other higher echelons of education. The government of the time did not want to involve people on the ground in issues that concerned them and their futures. It unilaterally decided on what was best for the people of South Africa and how best they could manage their own schools. However, the need for decentralised management amongst the Black schools grew and it was realised that "there should be a high degree of decentralisation (on a geographical and not on an ethnic basis) to provide for maximum involvement of the local community in education" (Unterhalter *et al.* 1991:11). It is evident that the government did not want to give local community schools power and authority to manage their own schools i.e. it did not want to decentralise its management function. But of course, decentralisation is not a panacea. According to Pollittt *et al.* (1998:1) "…decentralisation is sometimes made to sound like a miracle cure for a host of traditional bureaucracy and political ills". In order for decentralisation to be effective people need to be optimistic that it will bring about change.

Recently, Mr Stone Sizani (EP Herald 2002: 6) former MEC for Education of the Eastern Cape asserted "although the department was decentralising its management, democracy is impractical when schools have no authority". The minister recognised that school management teams possessed a knowledge base from which they could lead the school effectively. Also, through that knowledge emerges authority, which as Bottery (1992:164) suggests is both the teachers' right and duty to perform. Bush (1995:81) refers to this type of authority as the "authority of expertise – in professional

organizations there is a significant reservoir of power available to those who possess appropriate expertise".

Walker (1994:38) argues

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> Decentralization to a school level is accompanied by demands for schools to be responsive and flexible internally and this, in turn, has spurred a search for structures and ideologies which allow such conditions to emerge.

The Task Team Report (DoE 1996a: 33) suggests that in order for management to be decentralised, school communities should have "…a broader and more inclusive understanding of education management development". This understanding embraces among other things:

> The development of managers: the education training and long term support of managers
> The development of management: articulating and operationalising the principles of good management practice in South Africa
> The development of organisation: developing and sustaining effective structures, systems and procedures for improvement (*Ibid*: 133)

Once power and authority have been decentralised, the school and subsequently the teams are given freedom and autonomy to manage themselves.

2.3.2 Freedom and autonomy in schools

Once the team has been established, Walker (1994) suggests that it (the team) should be given freedom. Hayes (1997:199) postulates, "The team needs to be able to make its own decisions about how it carries out its work, and will not be able to function well if its decisions are frequently overruled or interfered with". This statement is fundamental to the exercising of power by a team. It depicts the theory underpinning an autonomous body. Hayes suggests that a team must be given sole mandate to use their own discretion without fear of having it rejected.

However, Walker (*Ibid.*40*)* cautions:

> The greater the degree of autonomy the team enjoys in the school, the more important it is to show the relationships amongst the various organisational components (*ibid*: 41).

The above point suggests that if teams work independent of external influences, the better internal arrangements need to be so that the various parts understand their role within the whole. It is thus almost as though more 'freedom' requires more coordination.

Clement (1996:23) asserts, "…Autonomy requires one to be free of one's coercion in one's decision making". According to Clement, to be autonomous is to be independent of the influences of your superior. An individual must have total control of the situation at hand. In schools "teachers require a measure of autonomy in the conduct of their professional activities" (Bush 1986:49).

From a philosophical point of view, Kant in Hill (1991:43) asserts "…autonomy is the foundation of human dignity and the source of all morality…" Here Kant is arguing for self-determination. He suggests that a person must be given respect in order for that person to see him/herself as valuable and his/her work appreciated. He is of the view that autonomy means recognising the people's strengths and weaknesses and admiring them. In the same vein, Clement (1996:22) argues "…autonomy means self-determination. An autonomous person is the one who is in control of his or her life rather than being controlled by outside forces".

Weale (1999:62) asserts that

> 'Autonomy' literally means prescribing a law to oneself (from the Greek *autos*, 'oneself' and *nomos*, 'law'), so that a democratic community would be one the members of which prescribe the laws of their collective life to one another.

In Weale's terms autonomy means setting rules that will affect yourself and vowing to abide by them. What is important in autonomy, therefore, is that you do not have a set of rules prescribed somewhere, you set rules that will affect your life yourself. "If people are given responsibility and autonomy, they will rise to it: if they are trusted,

they will be trustworthy" (Hayes 1997:23). Hayes here is of the view that people in a team are what you make them. Therefore it is important to instil the sense of trust in them first by acknowledging that they are capable of carrying out the job at hand. That optimism will enhance their morale and they will get job satisfaction and consequently do well in their endeavours.

In more sober vein, Morrow (1989:5) argues that "In a South African context autonomy is a little understood notion". This, I would say, is because people were never given the opportunity to exercise the freedom of governing themselves. The apartheid system did not give people on the ground a chance to experience such a phenomenon.

Giving people freedom and autonomy implies that certain powers have been delegated to those people. By virtue of their being in control of their activities with no directives to follow, they will feel totally responsible and accountable. Therefore delegation goes hand in hand with responsibility and accountability.

2.3.3 Delegation

Sometimes managers are overwhelmed by the work they do, or they cannot be in two places at the same time. In that case they will need assistance. Therefore managers need to make a decision as to whom to assign certain duties to. S/he will then have to delegate some responsibility to his/her subordinates. Blair (2003:1) argues, "Delegation is a skill…" and not the act of shelving some responsibility to the subordinates. This is witnessed by the fact that "if something goes wrong, you remain responsible since you are the manager…" (*Ibid*: 1). This means that accountability for the work rests with the manager itself and not with the delegated team.

Musaazi (1982:100) defines delegation as "the process of dividing up your total work and giving part of it to your subordinate or subordinates". Musaazi refers to delegation as a 'process' and not an event. Therefore delegation is not the same as asking a person or a group of people to do you a favour. Blair (2003:2) states, "The key to delegation is gradually". He suggests that through gradually guiding and assisting your subordinates you instil confidence in them. In the long run you will have a perfect group whom you

can trust and be confident of, because you have spent time with them, scaffolded and nurtured them. In other words you have supported them.

This is in line with Hersey and Blanchard's (in Hoy and Miskel 1996:292) situational leadership model, where members are gradually led to 'maturity' and the point at which delegation can take place. Initially leadership of the team is expected to be "high in task and low in relationship behaviours" (*Ibid.)*. This means that the newly formed teams need guidance and assistance because they are novices and are not familiar with the work at hand. They need to be developed towards self-determination where they can be confident of being conversant with their duties. Once a team reaches that stage, certain duties can be delegated to it. Until that stage is reached, the team will need directive leadership. According to them this is because:

> Individuals who have a high level of task-relevant maturity not only have the ability, knowledge, experience, and motivation to do the job but also feelings of self-confidence and self-respect about themselves (*ibid*: 1991:292).

Blair (2003:1) asserts that by delegating some of your responsibilities, you are "entrusting your authority to others". It is axiomatic, according to Blair that you do not just delegate responsibilities to a group or a team and kiss them good-bye. He suggests that you remain part of the team even if you are physically not there because some of your powers and mandate remain with the team and you are equally accountable for the results. Most importantly, "Delegation underpins a style of management which allows your staff to use and develop their skills and knowledge to the full potential. Without delegation, you lose their full value" (Blair 20003:1). He is of the opinion that if subordinates are not given an opportunity to exercise their capabilities, managers can never get to know their subordinates' full potentials.

However, it is argued that not all the tasks can be delegated, as some of them remain part of your job description. Blair (2003:5) argues that "there are managerial functions which you should never delegate – these are the personal/personnel ones which are often the most obvious additions to your responsibilities as you assume a managerial role".

Drake and Rue (1999:111) in Cunningham *et al.* (2000:141) assert that:

> Greater decentralization can bring schools closer to the people so that the schools may make decisions that will immediately affect the local area and provide the opportunity for their 'customers' to have a reasonable impact on the decision-making process.

In a school situation the allocation of work is not a simple task a principal can perform on his/her own. On one hand this is because the principal will feel overwhelmed by the amount of work s/he will have to do. On the other hand the head together with the teachers of that department know their needs better than the head of the school. Hence subject allocation is one of the tasks delegated to the head of each department.

Murphy in Cunningham *et al.* (2000:141) raises questions about delegation:

> …School districts are moving more toward a decentralised or site-based approach. Much research suggests that decentralization is most effective, although all are not convinced of the benefit of these shifts in power.

Murphy asserts that delegation is appreciated and working, but also reminds us that not all senior managers and principals are happy about sharing and devolving power to subordinates. The same applies to subordinates who are not ready to take responsibility and the power to carry out duties that were hitherto within the senior structures.

However, as I highlighted in the introduction, democratic management practices are not the absolute solutions, but are widely recommended for the kind of management practised in this epoch. But they also have their own shortfalls. I now pay special attention to the limitations and shortcomings of teams.

2.4 Limitations and shortcomings of teams

It has been argued that teams are better than groups and that they are widely recommended. However, teams have their own limitations and shortcomings no matter how effectively and efficiently they operate. For leaders who want to influence team decisions, Hayes (1997:187) concludes that teams "are troublesome to manage". In this sense teams need to be autonomous. Ironically, teams who function well form a strong

unit with specific objectives in mind and have also devised means and strategies to achieve them. Outsider influence – even a strong leader - might jeopardise their functioning.

He also argues that teamwork is time-consuming in that much time is spent "in defining goals, discussing approaches, and looking at alternatives (Hayes 1997: 187). Achieving teamwork is "largely a human-relations exercise …" (*Ibid.*: 187). Hayes here suggests that teams need to work towards good relations amongst them, and in the process the level and the amount of work to be done can be sacrificed.

I have already alluded to particular challenge inherent in making teamwork 'work' in contexts where members have been socialised into working independently of other, or where members are accustomed to responding to instructions from legal authorities. Thus the particular education management context in South Africa – as described be the Task Team Report earlier – will pose a challenge to the successful implementation of team management.

2.5 Summary

This chapter gave an overview of team management according to significant literature and policy documents. I started by giving the definition of a team to narrow the scope down and avoid confusion. This was followed by distinguishing between a team and a group. The importance and appropriateness of teams in our organisations and schools was then discussed. In exploring the viability of teams certain team dynamics emerged and special attention was given to the following: heterogeneity in teams, team effectiveness and rapport in teams.

Team management was presented as a response to the call for the democratisation of the education system in South Africa, as well as the need to break with the authoritarian apartheid past. I then distinguished between cooperation and competition in teams, and discussed joint vision building as a cornerstone of organisations. Teams are expected to have a shared vision, which serves as a 'compass' that directs any organisation in its endeavours to becoming better organisations.

Legislation expects all schools to have SMTs, but there is little agreement on the size of the body and the roles of its members. This chapter has also discussed democratic elements such as decentralised management, freedom and autonomy in schools and delegation. These have been described as urgently desired in our schools in the new dispensation.

Lastly this chapter critiqued team management by highlighting shortcomings of teamwork.

In the next chapter I discuss the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

> *Research is a process through which scientists systematically investigate various natural and / or social phenomena in order to generate new knowledge and validate the old* (Wamahiu 1995: 114).

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a discussion of the research paradigm and methodology used. I also discuss the sample of my study, data collection tools, data analysis as well as validity and reliability. The use of triangulation is then examined. Ethical considerations I have born in mind throughout this study are also discussed.

3.2 Research paradigm

There is no cut and dried definition of a paradigm. Many writers define paradigms according to their specific context. According to Guba (1990: 17) in (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:19) a paradigm is a "basic set of beliefs that guides action". It is evident that the researcher does not work haphazardly or as s/he pleases; therefore, it is expected that s/he work systematically according to a certain frame of reference which will dictate the kind of methods s/he is to employ as well as the kind of data anticipated. Hence Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 36) argue, "Paradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for the research and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation". According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 36) "Paradigms are systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions".

A paradigm therefore is more than a worldview or philosophy; it also frames the approach and methodology of enquiry. A paradigm has an abstract (philosophic) reference as well as being a practical guide to the researcher.

Some writers view a paradigm as an umbrella concept that embraces both the researcher and the research methods and methodologies. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:19)

view a paradigm as “the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm”. Kuhn in Mrazek (1993:20) defines a paradigm as “an overarching conceptual construct, an understanding of how the world or some segment of it operates”.

Research texts generally distinguish four chief orientations to research: positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and post-structuralism. The interpretive approach is well suited to research in the social sciences because of its constructivist base – it seeks to uncover how actors make sense of their “reality”. This approach therefore suits this study.

3.3 The interpretive paradigm

My research is situated in the interpretive paradigm. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) suggest that the interpretive researcher’s purpose is to gain understanding of situations that are complex. . This study is situated in schools that are complex networks in which staff members interact at various levels (Cheung and Cheng 1996:23). Rubin and Rubin (1995:34) argue that interpretive social research emphasises the complexity of human beings, and attempts to construct and understand their worlds. Working in this paradigm implies that I have investigated people within their contexts and attempted to make sense of their interpretation and experience of SMTs. According to Cohen *et al*. (2000: 22) “…The central endeavour in the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subject world of human experience”. Working in this paradigm has been appropriate because it has afforded me the opportunity to find out what the SMT members think of SMTs and how they understand the concept and its implications. According to Bassey (1999: 43) “…reality is seen as a construct of the human mind”. And to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:19) “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry”. In this study I relied on what the respondents told me and subsequently tried to unearth reality from their responses. Also I tried to make sense of what the SMTs understand about the school management.

“Interpretive researcher recognizes that by asking questions or by observing they may change the situation which they are studying” (Bassey 1999: 43). Since I have been interacting with many SMT members, my findings have been in some way analysed relative to the behaviour of my respondents. Hence Bassey (1999: 43) further argues, “to the interpretive researcher the descriptions of human actions are based on social meanings; people living together interpret the meanings of each other and these meanings change through social intercourse”. Social interaction of people is a cornerstone of individuals constructing meaning and reality of their surroundings. Through that interaction people are then able to express their lived experiences.

Also working in this paradigm has granted me opportunities to generate knowledge concerning the operation of SMTs in schools. Bassey (1999: 44) acknowledges, “To the interpretive researcher the purpose of research is to advance knowledge by describing and interpreting the phenomena of the world in attempts to get shared meanings with each other.” My choice of this paradigm has also enabled me to access members shared meanings, and how they view their practices.

3.4 Research participants

Before I decided on who my participants would be I took careful consideration of Arksey and Knight’s (1999:50) precaution that

> Sampling always needs to be done thoughtfully, since the sample of respondents or informants affects the information that will be collected and determines the sort of claims that can be made about the meaning of the information

I included all the government-aided high schools in Grahamstown. I chose these schools on the basis of “availability, accessibility, and theoretical interest” (Schwandt 1997: 140-1). My sampling was therefore driven chiefly by convenience. Also on the basis that the formalisation of team management is a recent development in South Africa and it would be interesting to see how different schools are responding to this challenge. Hence I selected these schools with a specific purpose of finding the general understanding of the SMTs’ perceptions of SMTs. Studying all 10 schools - 6 from the local township, 3 ex-model C schools, and 1 from the coloured township – has

produced a broad and varied picture of the implementation and nature of SMTs. However, I must stress at the outset the purpose of the study is not to compare schools (or types of schools) with each other, but simply to build a comprehensive picture.

3.4.1 Respondents' profile

The total number of my research participants was 28. I interviewed eleven of them. Out of eleven interviewees, five were principals - all males; two were deputy principals - both females; two HODs - a male and a female; one post level 1 educator and 1 grade coordinator, both females.

The principals' experience in the principals' positions range from 6 to 11 years. The deputy principals' experience in that position was 7 and 11 years respectively. The HODs had 8 and 10 years experience respectively. The post level 1 educator had 6 years experience in the management of the school, and the grade coordinator had only 3 years experience of school management. The majority of the research participants had thus been in management positions long enough to have experienced both pre- and post-SMT policy.

3.5 Research Tools

3.5.1 Questionnaires

My first step in the data-collection process was questionnaires administered to the SMT members of the schools. Walker (1993: 91) suggests that a questionnaire is "…a formalized and stylized interview, or interview by proxy", and I did indeed find that most of my interview questions emanated from the questionnaires I designed (see Appendix B).

Before I administered the questionnaires to the respondents I first piloted them. This helped me to identify questions that repeated themselves or were ambiguous and needed adjustment. Writers such as Oppenheim (1992), Morrison (1993), Wilson and McLean (1994:47 – all cited in Cohen *et al*. 2000:260) highlight many functions of

using the questionnaires. Oppenheim (1992:48) in Cohen et al (2000:261) summarises those functions and says, “everything about the questionnaires should be piloted, nothing to be excluded, not even the typeface or the quality of the paper”. I piloted my questionnaires on one deputy principal (a member of SMT) because Oppenheim (1992:62) suggests, “…respondents in pilot studies should be as similar as possible to those in the main enquiry, that is they should be a judgemental sample”. This helped in reducing the likelihood of getting a diversity of answers to the same question. Answers, of course, varied from SMT to SMT according to their circumstances but the context through which they answered the questions remained similar.

I handed out 42 questionnaires and only 28 (about 67%) were completed. The reasons for the SMTs not filling the questionnaire varied from school to school and from one SMT member to the other (see Research Realities below).

In the questionnaires I used open-ended questions to invite an honest, personal comment from the respondents (Cohen *et al.* 2000:255). My questionnaires included questions that revealed:

- Biographical details (to provide a picture of the sample as a whole in terms of experience)
- Their experience and perceptions of their roles within SMTs in managing the school;
- Their understanding of the opportunities and challenges involved in team management.

The purpose of the questionnaires was to collect base-line data, revealing a general picture of what was in place on the ground in terms of SMTs, and what the general attitudes to SMTs were.

3.5.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were my chief data collection tools. Kvale (1996:125) defines an interview as

> An interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest. It is a specific form of human interaction in which knowledge evolves through a dialogue.

Using an interview as one my research tools gave the respondents a chance of demonstrating what they know about SMTs, as well as exploring their attitudes and perceptions. Cohen *et al.* (2000:267) suggest that

> interviews enable participants – be they interviews or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view.

Interviews therefore are a way of sharing the experiences one has had in terms of his/her context. Interviews are narrative and depict the respondents' lived world.

I first ran a pilot interview. Piloting the interview helped me to "come to grips with some of the practical aspects of establishing access, making contact, and conducting the interview" (Seidman 1991: 30). That gave me an opportunity to re-organise and restructure my interviews based on what I had learnt from the pilot interview. Piloting the interviews minimised mistakes in the main interviews.

I conducted all the interviews in the respondents' places of work in order to honour their personal comfort. I held most of the interviews in their offices and some in convenient places such as in their school's laboratory. In one instance I had to interview the principal in his house.

I interviewed as many SMT members as necessary to find out what I needed to know (Kvale 1996:101). Thinking that perceptions might vary across post-levels I ended up interviewing 11 SMT members in total: 5 principals, 2 deputy principals, 2 HODs, 1 post level 1 educator and 1 grade coordinator (also see participants' profile). The final interview sample was to some extent dictated by circumstances, but I felt I had managed to interview a representative cross-section of management.

In all the interviews I used an interview schedule (Kumar 1999: 109) (see Appendix D). This helped me to be focussed and not wander and ask irrelevant questions. According

to Robson (1993: 238) “The interview schedule can be simpler than the one for the structured interview … and may include the following:

- Introductory comments (probably a verbatim script);
- List of topic headings and possibly key questions to ask under these headings;
- Set of associated prompts;
- Closing comments.”

The interview schedule has been very useful to me because it served as a checklist of what I needed to ask, and has assisted me to work systematically. My questions extended and built on the questions asked in the questionnaires, but of course the interview responses were far richer than the questionnaire data. This is facilitated by the fact that an interview is a shared interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Adopting a semi-structured interview approach left me free to probe beyond superficial answers (May 1993:93), so that I could be responsive to emerging issues (Schwandt 1997:74).

All interviews were tape-recorded. Using a tape recorder demonstrates to the informants that their responses are being treated seriously (Arksey and Knight 1999:105). Generally people I worked with appeared to be familiar with being recorded. To Seidman (1991: 87) “if something is not clear in a transcript, the researchers can return to the tape-recorder and check for accuracy.” Recorded information is original and one is unlikely to get a distorted version of the information. I used a tape recorder to record the interviews so as not to leave out any valuable information, and to get a true reflection of what the respondents told me. A tape recorder reduced the possibility of misinterpretation and hence the distortion of information was minimised. Seidman (1991: 87) argues that participants feel inhibited by the tape recorder at first but “soon forget the device”. This has been true in my study where one respondent initially refused to be recorded. She claimed that she was not aware that I was going to record her. I pointed out that recording the interview was about more than convenience, but also ethical issues which enables the researcher to verify his/her data. She agreed, and I recorded the interview. I did not notice any sign of her being intimidated by the tape-recorder. Her reluctance raises an issue I shall return to later.

3.5.3 Observation

"Observation is a direct firsthand eye-witness account of everyday social action…" (Schwandt 1997: 106). Being an observer implied that I was indirectly involved in SMTs meetings and was witnessing their behaviours firsthand. Before I observed their meetings, I communicated with the principals and the rest of the team that I would need to observe one or more of their SMT meetings. The principals had to come back to me and inform me of their next meetings. With informed consent I undertook overt observation because the respondents knew that they were being observed (Cohen and Manion 2000:314). By informed consent I safeguarded their privacy and welfare, and gave them a choice about whether or not to take part in my study (Arksey and Knight 1999:129). Their voluntary participation made things easier for all of us because they participated freely as if I was not there. Diener and Crandall in Cohen and Manion (2000:51) define informed consent as "the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would likely to influence their decisions". In most cases the principals agreed on the SMT members' behalf and just informed them of my coming to their meetings, but that did not constitute any problems in as far as their cooperation and contributions were concerned.

Observation revealed things that my respondents would not normally tell me and information that may have been missed in an interview and other forms of data collection (Cohen et al. 2000: 305). I used observation as a supportive or supplementary technique to collect data that may complement or set in perspective data obtained by questionnaires and interviews (Robson 1993: 238). In observations what people think and do is seen in practice. In that doing, the rationale and purpose behind certain decisions may be determined. I was there (in their meetings) to observe the processes and procedures using an observation schedule (Appendix E). The object here was not to check for accuracy of data, but to help gain a picture of how participants live what they believe. I went into the schools knowing in advance what I was looking for which Cohen *et al*. (2000: 305) refer to as structured observation. According to Patton (1990: 11) systematic and rigorous observation involves far more than just being present and looking around. The drawback of this approach is that one may be too

strongly focused on what one is looking for and thus miss the unexpected, or more subtle forms of interaction. This happened in my case to some extent. On reflection, a more open-ended schedule may have been more useful.

As Robson (1993: 206) puts it, structured observation "…is a way of quantifying behaviour… [and] tend to take[s] a detached, 'pure observer' stance".

As both the researcher and a local teacher who happened to know something about the schools I was working with, the danger of bias and pre-judgment was ever-present. Here Scott and Usher (1996:21)'s advice is invaluable:

> …we must recognise our situatedness [and] we must also 'bracket,' i.e. temporarily set aside, our meanings, suspend our subjectivity and assume the attitude of a disinterested observer.

3.6 Triangulation

As reported earlier, I collected the data from three different sources, and in my data analysis I attempted to triangulate the sets of data. According to Patton (1990: 187) "Triangulation is the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena or programs". Patton argues that it is advisable that "multiple sources of information [be] sought and used because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective of the issues being researched" (I*bid*.: 244). Triangulating the data sets gave me a broader picture of what the respondents perceived to be true, because I approach the research question from various angles. Triangulation can also increase the validity of findings because the strength of one approach compensates for the weakness of the other (Marshall and Rossman in Patton 1990:244).

There are assumptions underlying the use of triangulation in data analysis. According to Schwandt (1997:163) "…data from different sources or methods must necessarily converge on or be aggregated to reveal the truth". To Mouton (1996:156) the underlying assumption is that, "because various methods complement each other, their respective shortcomings can be balanced out". The truth of the matter is, using various

sources of data does not necessarily mean that the data from one source will neatly complement others. And information gathered by only one research tool does not constitute poor or unreliable information. Having different responses to the same question from different sources is not a problem to social science researchers. The challenge lies in seeing how such different understandings exist in the minds of those under investigation. Naturally, though, a high degree of convergence would be a bonus! To Mouton (1996: 156) the inclusion of multiple sources of data collection in a research project is likely to increase the reliability of the observations. This is true since reliability is concerned with consistency. Therefore using triangulation has, to some extent, reduced the likelihood of misrepresentation and increased the chances of validity and reliability.

3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis has taken the form of reviewing the three sets of data, identifying issues, and reporting these as main themes in terms of the research questions. I drew my conclusions from the implications the respondents suggested. Mouton (1996:111) is of the view that "we analyse data by identifying patterns and themes in the data and drawing conclusions from them". When I was identifying patterns I came across contradictory as well as complementary findings.

The first step was to compile the data from the questionnaires. Here, because of the large number of questionnaire responses (28) I simply grouped data according to questions asked. Questionnaire data play a secondary role in this study, as the interviews were seen as more likely to allow the kind of probing that interpretive research leans on.

As far as the interviews are concerned, I began by transcribing the interview data. For Seidman (1991: 281) transcribing "… is a crucial step, for there is the potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity". To avoid the loss of valuable data, I transcribed the tape myself immediately after every each interview. At that stage the interview setting was still fresh in my mind, and the body language and other gestures of the interviewee were also clearly remembered. This ensured that detail

was recorded. After transcribing the data I physically cut and pasted the respondents' responses onto a chart according to the questions. From there it was easy for me to identify commonalities and differences in the responses, and identify issues. To Creswell (1994:153) data analysis "requires that the researcher be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts".

I read through the data several times to familiarise myself with them. Knowing my data well gave me insight into what the respondents were saying. Then I listened over and over to the interview tapes and I picked up some points that the transcripts were not portraying as significant. The tone of the respondents helped me to identify those issues. I then established my 'superthemes' which embrace many subthemes. I then analysed the themes in terms of the research questions and literature. In that way I obtained a greater completeness adding depth and breath to my understanding of SMTs (Arksey and Knight 1999:22).

I chose to present the issues as themes without commentary in chapter 4, and discuss the findings in chapter 5.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Schwandt 1997: 106) defines ethics as "…moral dilemmas arising from issues of trust, confidentiality, harm, deception, consent, and so forth…" Ethical issues I have taken into consideration were anonymity, confidentiality and voluntary participation of my respondents. According to Creswell (1994:165) the researcher needs to take the welfare of respondents into consideration. In his words "First and foremost the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, and values, and desires of the informant(s)". Before I did anything concerning the respondents I had to check with them first, that is I had to get their permission to involve them.

Because there is no anonymity with face-to-face interview confidentiality was promised (Cohen *et al.* 2000:61). According to Arksey and Knight (1999:132),

> confidentiality is about not disclosing the identity of study participants, and not attributing comments to individuals in ways that can permit the

> individuals or institutions with which they are associated to be recognized, unless they have expressly consented to being identified.

To that effect I did not use the respondents' names and institutions. Douglas in Mouton (1996:157) argues, "Subjects tend to be reluctant or unwilling to participate because [they may] regard the investigation as an invasion of their privacy." This unwillingness occurred with one of my respondents (a principal) who was sceptical in allowing me to observe their meetings because of previous experience (see Research realities below). In the questionnaires, I assured the respondents that the information they furnished would be made available to my supervisor and myself only. Also I reiterated the fact that my study was for academic purposes and nothing else. Prior agreement to my presence with prospective participants had been reached through negotiation with the District Office, the principals and the SMT members (see copies of letter Appendix G).

Before commencing with my research, I had to consult the prospective participants and get permission to do so. I distributed letters from my supervisor that ask for permission to do research in their schools (see Appendix G). According to Creswell (1994:165), "the research objectives [have to be] articulated verbally and in writing so that they are clearly understood by the informants". For Eisner and Peshkin (1990:243) ethical conduct is, however, a more complex and profound issue:

> [It] is the infinitely more complex challenge of doing good, a consideration that places researchers at odds with one another as they raise entirely different questions about the location of good in the conduct of research.

It is therefore very difficult to do justice to this expectation, because at some point you have to impinge on their rights to get the research going. What I viewed as ethically correct (that is asking for permission to observe their meetings) was regarded as intruding in their privacy (as one educator jokingly commented), and the question of whether I was "doing good" may not have been a compelling argument!

3.9 Validity and reliability

Mouton (1996:109) defines validity as "…a quality of the elements (data, statements, hypotheses, theories and methods) of knowledge". The quality of the data gathered can be achieved through the honesty of the participants. In open-ended research (such as this study) the likelihood of being lied to is light, since respondents do not essentially 'know' what you want to hear. However, when I went to one school to observe their SMT meeting, one SMT member remarked that that meeting was for me because they usually did not have SMT meetings. Was the school 'lying' in arranging a meeting for my benefit? Clearly what I was seeing was not normal practice, and in this sense data gathered there could be regarded as unreliable. In another sense, though, I did observe a meeting of the SMT. Cohen *et al.* (2000: 105) argue that in qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty of both the researcher and the participants, as well as the depth, richness and scope of the data. Therefore validity is more than a simple 'practice what you preach' scenario. It is about more than checking whether what the respondents claim to be doing is actually what they are doing on the ground.

Therefore the main focus of validity is perhaps not the 'correctness' of findings, but the more elusive quality of believability. More important is the way in which I, the researcher, might be misrepresenting 'reality'. Maxwell (1996: 7-8) argues, "the key concept for validity is thus the validity threat: a way in which I might be wrong in my conclusions". My strongest validity threat I had to overcome was my bias. Fortunately here the purpose of my study kept me focussed and I soon realized that I was not there to test hypotheses or check up on people, but to find out how the SMT members mentally construct their own practices.

Wilkinson's (2000: 38) understanding of reliability refers to matters such as the consistency of a measure - for example, the likelihood of the same results being obtained if the procedures were repeated. This rather positivistic understanding of reliability seems inappropriate to this study, since it is understood that interpretive research does not produce 'results' at all, but findings, and these are rarely repeatable in the sense that an experiment may be. Bogdan and Biklen in Cohen *et al*. (2000: 119) argue that "in qualitative research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what the

researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched … a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage. What this translates into, for this study, is the extent to which my findings do indeed emerge from the data and nowhere else, and the extent to which the data capture the 'reality' projected by the research participants. Hence Schwandt (1997:137) concludes "reliability is an epistemic criterion thought to be necessary but not sufficient for establishing the truth of an account or interpretation of a social phenomenon". I have addressed this challenge by quoting from the raw data wherever it seemed necessary, thereby strengthening the reader's sense of the people behind the data.

3.10 Research realities

Research does not always proceed smoothly, and in this study I became aware of the extent to which a researcher is at the mercy of his or her research participants. In one instance when I went to collect the completed questionnaires from a school I found that one questionnaire was not completed. Apparently the SMT member in question was a grade R educator and my questionnaire specified, "This questionnaire is to be filled in by High School SMT members". It happened that the school was a combined school and I was not aware of this. However, since the focus of my study is secondary schools, I had to make alternative arrangements.

One particular SMT proved to be extremely uncooperative, and I ultimately failed to retrieve all the questionnaires I had left there. The problem was that the principal seemed too busy to hand the questionnaires to the rest of the SMT. He eventually tasked one SMT member to monitor the questionnaires (i.e. to issue them to the members and collect them), but every time I came to collect the questionnaires the teacher in charge had forgotten to remind other members. When he realised how much time I was wasting driving to and from the school he became sympathetic and he said to me "Sir instead of you coming to check the forms why don't you leave your telephone number so that I can contact you as soon as they are completed?" I left my cell phone number and that was the last I heard from him.

In several schools the questionnaires were not completed by the entire SMT. The reasons ranged from teachers being on sick leave, to accusations of selfishness of a person who never cooperated with whoever came to the school (and I was not an exception). In another case the school principal failed to hand the questionnaires to the SMT members and claimed to have forgotten when they had their SMT meeting. His first deputy principal learned that I wanted to have my questionnaire completed and he volunteered to distribute the questionnaires amongst themselves. Out of eight members, 6 completed the forms. The principal in question has yet to return his.

In another case the principal mandated the deputy principal to assist me in whatever way possible which pleased me because the deputy principal seemed very eager to help. I made an appointment with him for interviews one day. On my arrival I learned that the principal was away and the deputy unavailable for some reason. So he (the deputy) organised a teacher (female) for me to interview. She was keen to be of assistance in my research. But after asking her two questions I realized that she was not on the SMT. I immediately stopped the interview. She then called the deputy principal and used the vernacular in explaining to him that she was the "wrong" respondent. Then he approached another teacher, also female, who was in the SMT and asked her to present herself for an interview with me. She complied and we had an interview in her classroom.

When it came to observations I did not have problems with former model C schools because they were keen to help and had SMT meetings every week. But when it came to the schools in the township, it was a headache. There were all sorts of excuses. I had to issue them a follow-up letter (see Appendix G) because they were not responding and we were approaching the end of year examinations. Cohen and Manion (2000:263) argue that the purpose of the reminder letter is to "re-emphasize the importance of the study and the value of the respondents' participation", which is what my second letter did. Ultimately I was not able to observe as many meetings as I would have liked.

In summary, it is not easy to conduct research. The researcher needs to be patient and persevere and stay focussed. Teachers seem not to be keen on participating in educational research. This is perhaps because they are overwhelmed by their own work and do not have time to help in other research. Or perhaps it is because they lack

intrinsic motivation. Whatever the reason, researchers need to face the sobering truth that one's research project is not likely to be a priority in others' lives, regardless of how important it may be to you.

What these incidents reveal about schools' level of professional maturity and functioning is another matter which I will not pursue here. My own understanding of the role of research is that is likely to feed into the ideal of the learning network, or learning organisation to which policy documents refer. Researchers should be welcomed with open arms, and there is much to be gained from school-university collaboration.

In the next chapter I present my data.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION

The chief research question this study seeks to answer is how SMT members perceive and experience team management within their school contexts. Since SMTs are (officially) a relatively new phenomenon in school management, the research set out to explore how school management team members' experience the phenomenon, what role they think it plays or could play and what the challenges might be.

This chapter presents the data gathered through interviews, questionnaires and observation. The interviews provide the chief data, and since the principals' responses differ significantly from those of other SMT members, these are presented first.

Questionnaire and observation data are reported where these are felt to be helpful in presenting a comprehensive portrayal of the phenomenon under investigation. For the sake of completeness the raw data emerging from both of these secondary sources (questionnaires and observation) are included as Appendix C and F respectively.

The general picture that emerges is overwhelmingly positive: school managers generally welcome the concept of team management, and believe that it has many positive consequences/attributes. However, the picture is complex, and frequently team-management is characterized by tensions, conflicts and other threats. These are presented separately where possible, though often threats emerge as points of tension.

The data are presented in themes identified through close reading of the interview transcripts. Respondents are distinguished from each other by means of the following key:

P = Principal
DP = Deputy Principal
HOD = Head of Department
PL1 = Post-level one teacher

The numbers (1-5) indicate the order in which the transcripts were analysed.

The following are the themes that emerged from the data obtained from the principals:

- Sharing the load
- Empowerment and staff development
- Participative management
- Leadership in team management
- Threats or challenges

Principals' responses

4.1 Sharing the load

The questionnaires confirm that the concept of team management is not a new phenomenon in schools (see page 127). However, the formalisation of SMTs has enabled principals to divide the workload of managing schools among staff members. Roles typically allocated in SMTs are discussed in 4.6.

On a technical level, principals use team management to allocate different sections or activities in the school to other staff members. P1 uses the guidelines to allocate roles to SMT members. P2 refers to a "system …of dividing the work …" P3 believes schools are too complex to be run single-handedly, and thus delegates sections to different staff members. P3 reiterates: "…you can't expect one individual to have a finger on everything and actually have a correct opinion on everything…" P4 believes that "many hands make light work" and showed me an organogram on which the tasks of running the school are allocated to "various educators in the SMT …" P5 acknowledges that "I can't do the job on my own" and that he initiates the allocation of duties and encourages voluntarism. In his words "I draw up the needs, put them on the board and ask all the staff to tick all they would like to do by writing their names next to it. If nobody wants to do a certain job I say, is there any volunteer?"

In this sense, team-management lightens the load of running a school; as P2 puts it: "the task is less burdensome upon one man's shoulders". These ideas are borne out by questionnaire responses (see page 127) where reasons for SMTs' existence such as the

need for a ‘larger body’ to ‘co-manage the school’ are mentioned. Another reason given is that SMTs are a response to policy requirements, which will be discussed later.

My observation of SMT meetings confirm that different SMT members are allocated sections of the school to manage. Details of allocation of roles are discussed in 4.6.

Of course simply sharing the workload may not always be a positive experience. Some of the respondents point to the danger of delegation. This is dealt with later under 4.5.

4.2 Empowerment and staff development

A strong theme emerging from the data is that team management provides opportunities for empowerment and staff development. P1 includes post-level 1 teachers who have the “Know-how, skills and expertise of some kind” on his SMT. Two of the questionnaire responses also mention the inclusion of post-level 1 teachers in SMTs (see page 128). Principals also rotate the chairing and finalizing the agenda roles among SMT members (P1 and P2) as a way of empowering them. The fact that post-level 1 teachers are valued members of SMTs was confirmed by the postponement of a meeting I was meant to observe because the teacher was away on official business: the committee were not prepared to meet simply for the sake of meeting.

The way in which principals approach departmental guidelines also provides evidence of teamwork and staff development. P2, for example, explains how his SMT designed “additional guidelines” for their internal school policy. This is clearly a learning opportunity for staff. P3 believes that school problems are unique and the departmental guidelines are generic, and therefore argues, “…you then have to adjust policies and have your own (guidelines) which you can use in a particular school.” P4 has “formulated guidelines from the experience that we have” and he is also of the view that “…HODs need to formulate departmental policy that is in line with the school policy”.

Technology plays an increasingly important role in the staff development and P3 claims: "…Filing and other administrative work are done on the computer". And P4 "… has got post level one teacher who is doing administrative work on the computer".

P5 uses peoples' strengths and abilities and builds upon them by "…providing other people opportunities to grow for them to do things". For example he describes if "one of our SMT members is not heavily involved in sport – he's not a sporting person but he's a strong academic, so I'll use him to draw up the exam time-tables and monitor curriculum" and vice versa. Principals are alert to the opportunities of promoting growth among colleagues. As P3 explains:

> Also you give tasks to other SMT member to empower them as well so that they know how the school is run in every day-to-day basis because in future they will have to apply for senior posts, so wherever they go they don't feel unempowered …

And as P5 explains:

> …You're providing other people opportunities to grow for them to do things and the more a person can do the more they are going to grow the better teacher they're going to become better managers or administrators.

I observed at SMT meetings that teachers had been given the responsibility of managing portfolios within the school. These teachers were given opportunities for feedback in the meetings. In one of the meetings I observed the principal called in an 'expert' post-level 1 teacher to participate in deliberations.

The notion of equality among staff members is prominent in two responses. One principal is of the view that when it comes to the actual doing of the job everybody is equal in his school. He (P2) has this to say:

> …we share a lot of things just to take a small example: John is in charge of the examinations. We generally have the matrics writing in the hall - they are supervised by their teachers and the teachers are backed up by HODs who do have register classes. So if there is a problem in a particular class, say, teacher A is not at school because of a particular decision, then Ray has to see to it that somebody replaces that teacher and I have on number of occasions, when everybody is writing and then you find out there is one or two (teachers) absent I have been involved

> directly in invigilation myself because he'll have nobody else to send to the class and then he'll say then I'm sending you (laughing).

P3 is similarly committed to equal acknowledgement of all team members:

> When you are sitting as an SMT we set up rules, in that I'll mention a few: All ideas are important - All ideas in the SMT are as important as each other. No idea is less than the other – even the point of view; the points of view are of an equal level in terms of importance.

The question of whether learners could be included in SMTs did not receive much support. Principals do not see SMTs' functioning as an opportunity for learners to develop their management skills. P5 believes that learners should be included in the SMT (see also page 128) for smooth running of the school but feels that other stakeholders, such as senior teachers, would be uncomfortable with this.

4.3 Participative management

The strongest theme to emerge from the data is the notion of participative management. Clearly this is the cornerstone of team-management, and the effective functioning of SMTs. Participants generally show high levels of commitment to participative management, though there are also potential threats and problems (see 4.5).

P1 and P5 view participative management to be concerned mainly about agreement among the parties and both point to the benefits that accrue. They say, respectively: "If you agree on what you are doing..." and "by agreeing, everybody agreeing on something…" the school is more likely to be well-managed.

P2, P4 and P5 argue that as a principal you have to sell your idea to your SMT. P2 warns, "…if I've got an idea I have to sell it so that it can be endorsed in the SMT meeting and then … taken from that point to the teachers…" P4 adds, "You cannot just push your idea through even if you are the leader or principal - you will be seen as a dictator…you will lose support." This is contrary to working as an individual because "…as an individual you can push through your idea…" since there is no team to

account to (P4). P5 offers the following advice: “if I have an idea I will discuss around the idea [sic] and try to get them make the decision…"

P2 also claims that in participative management “all ideas are equal” and that “people answer on behalf of the idea”, a strong statement of what teamwork brings about in terms of ownership of decisions.

P3 welcomes participative management in that it “…tends to generate lovely debates…” because “…there will always be difference of opinions.” And also “you’ve got to learn to see that (difference of opinions) as a strength rather than a problem” because “different opinions often lead to you strengthening your position…” My observation of SMT meetings revealed that meetings were generally characterised by an open, participative climate (see Appendix F). Principals generally chaired the meetings, but did not dominate discussion. All members were encouraged to participate and were listened to and taken seriously. In some cases the meetings took place in venues other than the principals’ offices, such as a laboratory which was one of the SMT members’ teaching venue.

Of utmost importance in democratic management are the notions of consultation and communication. P5 claims that “most of my management is consultation – consultative management; I talk to people." P3 is of the view that “…if you have regular meetings it (participative management) should not be much of a problem”. The questionnaires reveal that most SMTs meet when necessary, rather than on a regular, pre-planned basis (see page 128). Questionnaire responses similarly point to “transparency”, “openness” and “communication” as significant components of an effective SMT (see page 131). From my observation of meetings it was also clear that SMTs felt strongly that some issues could not be finalised before obtaining staff input.

Consultation seems to occur in both formal and informal ways. P4 says “you don’t have to have meetings all the time – [rather] consult on a daily basis – it’s good to consult every time”. He also consults other stakeholders timeously: “… I’m working with my governing council especially the executive members almost on a daily basis, I don’t wait for meetings”. At school he consults on a one-to-one basis, “…you just call an HOD and say come sit down, what is happening? Tell me about this. You don’t have to

call a formal meeting, that's what I do". He also stresses that "you should be in control, and you should consult and communicate with your HODs".

Respondents feel that working in teams is likely to bring about cooperation. On that score P4 says "I've realized that you cannot do everything on your own, you need people to assist, to cooperate and to help".

P4 cites the following example of team accomplishments:

> We celebrated 125th birthday years of the school three years ago. I could never have done that on my own. We set down as the staff and elected a committee and wasn't just the SMT but any members of the staff and one staff member took on he said he would like to advertise it, one wanted to do fund raising and we delegated what we wanted to do and it worked out, it was a great success.

P5 attributes the school's academic improvement to teamwork:

> Results - our results have improved since the SMTs taken full charge our results for the past two years … in 2001 it was 63 percent and last year it was 83.9 percent it was an increase of 20.9 percent, that to me is a most significant achievement and that starts with teamwork. It starts with good administration.

Respondents highlighted decision-making as very important in participative management. P2 believes that "we should own decisions that we make…" and to do that P3 suggests that we "…make sure that other people also bring their things on board…" According to P2, once people own decisions they "…own the school and it becomes **our** school or our thing rather than an individual thing…" To achieve that P5 ensures that "…other people have their input and say…" because "it is important that the SMT works as a team and accept decisions made". However, there will always be cases where unilateral decision-making is the best option, as P2 explains:

> There are circumstances which can actually force you to take a particular decision but that does not mean you are autocratic or anything but you take a particular decision because something has got to be done and there is no time to talk about it. If I see children fighting here or somebody coming into the school you don't expect me to call a meeting

> of teachers and ask them whether to call the police will be the correct thing or not (laughing).

Some of the principals show cognizance of the vision of the school and that of other SMT members. P1 ensures that "…the vision of the school is upheld …" before any action can be taken on a particular issue. P2 is of the view that other stakeholders need to be aware "…what our (SMT) vision is pertaining to a certain point…" When members act in a way that is contrary to what the SMT is doing it is because, according to P3, "…they don't have the same vision you (SMT) have of the school…" To remedy the situation, P3 suggests, "People know why we are doing certain things and where we want to go", and he believes "…individuals share in the vision…" P4 concludes that participative management "…gives you a broader vision… so that can make informed decisions".

Whereas it was obvious from the meetings I observed that principals did indeed value every member's input, the nature of the meetings was such that it would be difficult to comment on the extent to which awareness of vision and shared vision was driving management. The meetings were chiefly of an organisational or administrative nature (see Appendix C). If I had conducted the research early in year, or towards the end of a year, it may have been possible to observe strategic planning activities.

…I do believe that sometimes there are cases he (the principal) really have to make decisions on his own. Maybe is a case he has to do it very quickly there is no time to everybody to gather quickly to help him. **(PL1)**

On the whole, though, participative management is regarded as worthwhile because as P3 puts it "…it forces you to think things through" and also "you know that people are supporting you…"

4.4 Leadership in team management

A strong theme emerging from the data is that leadership is very important in team management and that in one way or another the success of any organization depends on

the strength of its leadership. P1 and P4 believe that in whatever happens in the school the principal should "…take the lead…" and "…lead by example…" respectively. P4 is of the view that "…the leader should be ahead and if there is anything new you should know it first – lead from the front not the back". The picture of leadership that emerges from the principals emphasises the tension between the leader's role in initiating and driving teamwork on the one hand, and being in control and accountable on the other.

On the one hand, principals see themselves as teamworkers and delegators. P2 and P5 believe that principals are initiators in their schools. P5 prefers to talk about "leadership rather than management" as he believes that leaders "emerge" while managers "are trained"; according to him "…management is a structured thing; I like to use the term leadership because with leadership I have got to initiate changes – management doesn't come with changes." P1 states that leadership can "…be prompted" in another member of the SMT responding to problems that have been collected from different members of staff". Leadership is thus not necessarily positional. As leaders they also need to delegate some duties. P4 warns in this regard "…when you give somebody responsibility, don't interfere, wait for the end result". Delegation is a feature of democratic leadership. As leaders, principals are free to exercise their discretion in certain circumstances. P3 feels that as a principal "…there are decisions which you've got to take sometimes but it must not be your style of taking decisions alone all the time."

On the other hand, principals are conscious that they are bureaucratically accountable to the authorities, and sometimes act individually. P5 acknowledges the assistance of SMT members, but stresses that "if something goes wrong it starts with me". When it comes to accountability, P2 laments, "…really you have to account as an individual. It's not the whole SMT who accounts…" and subsequently feels "embarrassed accounting on behalf of other people". According to P4 principals need to:

> Accept being accountable because somebody should be accountable …it (accountability) comes with the package of being a school principal (laughs). You are paid to take whatever comes and it's also to the position as the principal you have be accountable.

He also adds:

> The principal represent the whole SMT when it comes to the district office…whatever happens at school comes back to the principal…you are almost like you are the guilty party – you are the guilty person as the principal because you couldn't bring that person around or to change his problem.

And he warns: "When there is a problem like a crisis it (principalship) becomes a very lonely position".

In elaborating on principals' roles, the responses reveal a similar dual nature. Some of their roles seem purely technical or bureaucratic, such as:

> Ensuring that there is a meeting if there is a need for it
> Ensuring punctuality
> Accounting to whoever comes to school (such as parents and departmental officials)
> Chairing meetings
> Monitoring staff
> Coordinating meetings
> Being in control
> Being responsible

The questionnaires similarly emphasise the principal's key role in calling and chairing meetings, and also as 'the final say' if no decision can be reached (see page 129).

On the other hand, some of their functions indicate an acceptance of their roles as human resource developers, such as

> Giving guidance
> Making use of the staff's skills and talents
> Being very open and transparent
> Being involved
> Setting an example
> Listening to ideas coming from the SMT

It is evident therefore that team management does not diminish the importance of leadership and accountability; hence principals need to be authoritative at times. P5 remembers being coercive at some stage; he says, "If I want the staff member to do

something and he is not keen on it I'll say 'No you've got to do it because it needs to be done'".

Visibility and being in touch also emerge as features of leadership. Some principals feel that they are involved in every activity that takes place in their schools. For example, P3 reports:

> I happen to know everything that happens in my school on a day to day basis - every activity I'm involved in, every sub-committee I am there; be it a meeting I am there, be it a sporting activity I'm always there even if I don't have time but it's important that even if it's a sporting event you have to appear as a principal even if it's 5 or 10 minutes so that you feel the pulse of your school in every corner sometimes it helps and it builds, it motivates even to learners and the teachers who are given that particular role or task to handle… I mean in all sporting codes I always give support in whatever be it a show that is presented I always appear.

And P4:

> I feel I am in touch with everything that's happening. I'm not saying everything is right but I'm in touch with what is happening there. I know exactly what is happening, I can tell you what is happening because I feel involved – I am involved as a leader and I should be involved. You know sometimes even if I'm sick at home I'm still involved because my phone is constantly ringing. I'm always in touch. I feel very much involved.

4.5 Threats or challenges

Respondents feel that although teamwork is generally advantageous it has its own threats and challenges. P1 points to the challenge of forming of a strong team: "More effort should be put towards building a team so that you really have a strong team…"

P3 highlights personal clashes that might arise:

> Where people are involved there will always be difference of opinions and personality clashes…there might be problems emanating from staff to other staff… there might be personal clashes which cannot be accommodated properly, there might be different agendas.

Because of the political attitudes of some teachers principals may at times feel pressurised to consult more broadly than they wish to. On the question of whether post level one teachers should be included in the SMT, principals take defensive and 'politically correct' positions. According to P1, if teachers are not included in the SMT:

> They (the staff) will not accept it (the resolution) because they were not part and parcel of synthesizing the solution – they will reject it; they would oppose the decision to ensure that the planning is done by them as well…But if there are teachers in the SMT they readily accept whatever the SMT comes up with…

He adds: "If I can call a staff meeting without having consulted with the SMT members they would disagree vehemently to that, they might boycott the staff meeting because any staff meeting must be sanctioned by the SMT."

According to P5 "…if you are working as a team, that team is going to convince the rest of the staff that what you are doing and the decisions you are making are the right decisions", but even he believes that including a post level one teacher in the SMT "…will create a problem with other post level one teachers because why are they left out?" Interestingly, the questionnaire data reveal that SMTs usually consist only of teachers in promotion posts; other staff are 'co-opted' for their expertise at times (see page 128). This is in line with the recommendations referred to in chapter 2.

P2 sees "Policies of the department" as threats to team management because they have to make sure that "…whatever decision we take it is not contrary to any of the policies of the department." Compliance with policy also emerges as an issue for P3 who claims that "…to manage the school on a daily basis or based on the departmental policy …" is a challenge team management is facing.

Principals are also aware that not all team members are equally strong and reliable. P1 stresses that relying on other team members may mean that "You might not meet certain due dates and the major thing is to meet due dates by the department." P4 feels that some teachers are lazy. In his words: "You get teachers that [sic] would want to do the basic minimum, saying that's where my job description ends. You get teachers who are negative", which obviously threatens to derail attempts at team-building.

According to P3: “Working in teams you rely on the weakest person” and you find that “… not every HOD is pulling his or her weight.” This may lead to some members being overloaded, as P5 explains: “I do a lot of things myself because the staff is overloaded…experience tells me when they are overloaded.”

Disloyalty to the team is another issue that surfaces in team management. P2 refers to ‘sabotage’ as a threat to teamwork:

> I would not say to sabotage as it were but they (SMT members) would go around the corner and seem not to agree with you on what you agreed on the SMT when they meet other colleague teachers and would view the same point in another way.

To P5 this can also occur then “… one or two people who were not part of the discussions they will go out and cause problems.” A more deeply rooted cause of disloyalty may be, according to P3, that “You might not share the same vision and then you’ll find disruptive elements within the team…, those are present dangers.”

Some principals find it difficult always to trust team members. According to P1: “If you were doing things yourself you would overwork yourself to ensure that due dates are met.” P5 believes that team work is difficult for the leader because “The job may not be done the way you would like it, you may not get that personal satisfaction.” P4 takes a similar view of teamwork, suggesting that some members do not practice what they preach. He explains: “You get people who can tell you the most beautiful things in a meeting situation, the most beautiful ideas; but when it comes to reality it is not implemented.” He also claims that “some principals do everything themselves…” because as a principal “You cannot abdicate responsibility – give it away to somebody else.” P4 points out another reason why some principals prefer to do everything themselves: he recalls his predecessor who kept back information because “He was almost afraid that if showed somebody, that man will know more and will take over his position.” It seems that the need or personal satisfaction with a job well done can drive principals to tackle projects individually rather than delegate to team members. P5 explains:

> The job may not be done the way you would like to do it. If I'm going to run the governing body elections – I know how I would like to do it but I have delegated it to someone else he may not do it the same way I want to do it. You may not always have that personal satisfaction but if you trust whatever they do it's going to be fine.

'Letting go' can thus be more difficult than it seems, especially where personal pride plays a role.

Principals also feel that teamwork is time consuming. P3 argues:

> Things are not done quickly enough because of the process of consultation and talking because sometimes it does take time to actually come to one opinion about something or to an acceptable opinion, and things that need urgent attention sometimes don't get it…

And according to P4:

> Maybe you would like to do something today but now remember you have to consult with the team – you have to call the team together and discuss. Based on the time factor again sometimes it is not easy to agree on something it takes hours and hours to debate and to…(I won't say argue) but to debate this thing, you go back and say let us go back again and come back in two or three days time…

The overall picture that emerges is mixed, but overwhelmingly positive. Principals by and large welcome team management, though a point of tension is the extent to which to 'let go' and risk failure or embarrassment. All three data sources – the interviews, the questionnaires and observation – confirm that principals have a positive attitude to team management, and seem determined to make it work.

I now report on the data gathered through interviews with SMT members other than principals. Here I follow the same format: the interview data lead the discussion, and questionnaire and observation data are fed in where appropriate.

Other SMT members' responses

Though the issues reported on here are roughly the same as those in the previous section, I use slightly different titles usually to show difference in emphasis.

4.6 Allocation of roles and support

The picture that emerges from the respondents reveals that schools are divided into smaller areas so that they can be easily managed. They say the division is done mainly by the principal but in consultation with other teachers. PL1-1 says:

> It starts from the principal and the management team who decides who is to be more or less responsible for what in the school. They (the staff) are allowed to go to Mr X (the principal) to ask him if they can do this rather than something else because they feel that they are better for that; they have a say in what they would like to do.

PL1-2 reiterates, "…The principal draws up the plan that goes to the management team first and then the staff and then the individuals…" In DP1's situation:

> We are two deputy principals and she (the principal) says here are the duties, which one do you think you can do best? And then she gives you duties and sometimes we are given duties even if you think cannot do them, it's your duty you must do it.

To H1 "…we divide the work amongst ourselves as the school management team", and PL1-1 explains that "certain people are made responsible for certain things so that everybody has a task and everybody is responsible for that and then of course they report back to the principal."

To PL1-2 the roles of SMT members overlap. She says:

> The grade coordinators now are mainly involved with hearings, the learners, and the ethos of kids whether it's from academic to discipline or whatever. HODs are largely management but there is an overlap, I'm still a grade coordinator and I'm also involved with the management side.

All in all participants believe that sharing the work load is worthwhile as DP1 and H2 put it respectively: “I’m not working alone we are working together with class teachers and other teachers…” and “It’s also helpful in giving us direction when we want to plan - which aspects must we cover in our planning.” PL1-1 gives an example of how members can be given roles to ensure that what you want to do is a success. She says:

> You have to have teams to make sure that things are working properly. One person alone can’t do something properly. One person can do this and another person something else. For example a bazaar that we had at the end of the year, where everybody had a task…

In examining the roles and responsibilities of different SMT members an interesting picture emerges. Here are the details:

> DP1: I’m responsible for Grades 10, 11, 12. I’m a CASS leader and I’m responsible for what they used to call quarterly returns, I’m also leading examinations and I’m also responsible for making sure that there is discipline in the school but I’m not working alone; we are working together with class teachers and other teachers.

> H1: [My role] is to look after the children’s problems at the same time I’m working with a certain group of teachers concerning subject matter for example, things like looking at certain policies like HIV / AIDS policies, admitting policy and so on. I’m responsible for grade 12 so sometimes I hold meeting with the grade 12s – try to motivate them to attend school to attend classes and then I also hold meeting with teachers apart from the staff meeting that we usually hold, we also have subject meetings

> H2: I also take care of all matters that have to do with languages in the school to ensure that the departmental policy is followed and then as a member of the SMT I have to ensure that we take good decisions and that those decisions are carried forward, are implemented.

> PL1-1: Firstly there are certain things that I’m responsible for. I try and keep the staff together to listen to issues that they are unhappy of and to go to management team if I hear things like that to make them aware of that if they were not aware of it. To do my part of the whole school and staff and everybody is happy and working well. Also exam timetable, bookstore, grade 12 entries, people bringing their Grade 8 & 9 work and I mark them and take some of that to the principal.

> PL1-2: I'm in charge of the learners and I'm an HOD on the committee so I would oversee problems and discipline and the RCL reports to me, and [I am] also the person who liaises between the parents-teachers association and the staff.

> DP2: I attend meetings. There are some circulars from the district office which I fill in as it is now is the end of the quarter, there is quarterly attendance report which I have to submit of the educators and of the learners. The paper work – registration of grade 9 &12, corrections of the schedules then helping in moderating the schedules& mark lists of the teachers and controlling of stock. I'm also entrusted with the department of guidance, it's also under me seeing that we are short staffed in the SMT for example I have to attend workshop for guidance, I have to supervise the guidance teachers, I have to help the grade 12s. When there are visitors from tertiary institutions, I also have to coordinate that.

The list reveals a wide range of responsibilities indicating the extent to which team functioning has been enacted in the schools under investigation. The tasks mentioned also vary considerably in terms of complexity especially in terms of the presence or absence of the human element of management. Tasks that are merely administrative seem to be in the minority. The questionnaire responses point to what one might refer to as generic management functions (such as planning, decision making, and so on – see page 130). This is a good example of where the impersonality of a questionnaire fails to ensure the gathering of rich data: it was only in the follow-up interview that a more experience-based set of duties emerged. My observation of SMT meetings bore out these references to different members of staff taking responsibility for areas of school management. In these meetings it was clear that members of the SMT (other than the principal) could speak with authority and confidence on the management areas they were running.

An interesting finding is the need expressed by one respondent for challenging activities. SMT members get used to their prescribed duties and as a result feel unchallenged and perhaps bored. P1 suggests that SMTs need to be given activities that will drive them to work together. In his own words**:**

> One should come up with activities which will make people work together, which will force them to work together and enjoy working together or doing the particular things together such kind of things they foster the spirit of teamwork**.**

Another perceived essential ingredient of teamwork is support. Respondents generally see support as characteristic feature of teamwork. Obtaining and providing support boosts the morale of the participants and the team members become more committed to what they are doing. According to the GC:

> …I think we can support each other… I think if there is input from all sectors so it's not one person who has a good idea, it's all of us who feed into system where there's a good idea and everybody can make the idea better, and I think all of us as human beings need the support and the encouragement and feedback.

According to P2:

> [Support] is the essence of teamwork……When people do their work in a team situation then they find it easier to work actually because they know that they are going to be supported, you are going to support them you are going to provide the necessary support and that they are going to be rewarded for good work done.

4.6.1 Broader participation

Like the principals the respondents agree in principle that it is imperative to "…include teachers who are not part of the SMT" (DP1) in their SMTs so that "…those teachers will gain experience by being involved…" (H1). According to DP2 the school has also"…incorporated two educators" in the SMT. I assume these are the teachers co-opted for their expertise referred to in the questionnaire. DP2 argues that the inclusion of teachers in the SMT ensures smooth running of the school because "…the decisions are easily understood and accepted by educators."

Broader participation has many positive consequences. For H2 the fact that duties in the SMT are rotated is important. H2 explains: "I'm a member and sometimes I write minutes … we rotate in writing minutes" and he feels part of the team: "…all the time I'm always there, give my inputs in the things that are discussed." For H1 the way in which the team adapts official guidelines to their circumstances is a sign of personal and professional growth. H1 explains: "We try to integrate them (guidelines) with what

we already have at the school." For DP2 delegation is a way of developing people, and she is committed to this: "I also delegate…delegating work is another way of developing say, the least junior teacher."

To PL1-2 human relations are very important and form the basis of empowerment. In her words:

> I also believe that a huge part of management is support of the staff …show a way of working …we need to encourage the staff and be in touch [with] where they are at as far as possible, and try and build spirit because I believe a happy staff and staff that have support work better…

4.6.2 Decision making

Generally the respondents feel that decision-making is crucial in any organization and they claim to be involved in the decision-making processes in their schools. PL1-2 believes that "…if you are in a decision-making position, then group work or teamwork is essential." H2 explains:

> We make decisions and decisions are easily accepted because people feel that they are part of the decision-making and also when there is a problem facing them…when we take a decision the decision is taken jointly as a team as a result when you have to implement that decision everybody accepts it…

According to DP1 this is so because "…when there was no SMT the principal was there to make unilateral decisions; now that there is an SMT there is quality decision making, we make decisions as a team - as an SMT…" PL1-1 similarly feels empowered by her role in decision-making: "I'm part of decisions that have to be made and things that have to be decided about. Not a specific role, but I'm part of the discussions and part of the decisions that have to be made." The fact she does not have "a specific role" is less important than her right to be part of the decision-making process.

In PL1-2's situation the staff as a whole makes the final decision:

> …we all work together and decisions generally are referred to the governing body first… decisions go through the committee - the management team - and go back to the staff…where decisions would be made…

But sometimes the majority decisions do not always please everyone. PL1-2 remembers: “There have been times when I’ve been frustrated by the decisions that have been made because I didn’t agree with them.” PL1-1 acknowledges that “sometimes there are cases he (the principal) really has to make decisions on his own.” Here the SMT members seem to be in agreement with the principals. P3 shares the same sentiments and he has given an example of that prerogative. One questionnaire respondent shares the same feeling: “The principal needs at times to make some decisions to either salvage or sink the ship. Leaders have to be able to do that sometimes.”

According to PL1-1, participative management needs:

> … People who can sit together and make decisions, people who can put ideas together and people who can help one another. And the fact that we (SMT) pool ideas leads to a better management structure…because everyone is free anytime to bring up ideas and concerns…

H2 believes that participative management “…gives (the SMT) a chance to make better decisions because “…two heads are better than one” (DP1). To PL1-2 “…all of us have a turn to have our input and try to bring ideas…” She further warns:

> If you have your own idea and others aren’t allowed to have their say and give input - that is restrictive for the person in employment in the school and that prevents the school from getting those new ideas.

4.6.3 Communication

What transpired to be the strongest disparity between the principals and other SMT members is the question of communication. The principals by and large do not find communication to be an issue, but other members feel strongly that communication is vital in an organization.

DP1 starts by giving the definition of communication. She says “communication is a two way process.” She advises that as a principal you must be someone

> who is good in communication…you must listen to your educators, your learners and try to implement what they suggest if you see that it can help improve the situation of the school.

To H1, participative management is strengthened by members “…understanding each other, communicating with each other and having that drive to succeed…and to make sure that you make a difference.” PL1-1 believes that SMT members need to “…ensure that there is enough openness or communication between the top level and the staff members.” If there is proper communication “conflicts could be ironed out, misunderstandings could be ironed out because everybody is brought on board” (DP2). Communication also features on the list of requirements for an effective SMT (see page 132).

4.7 Perceptions of leadership

A significant difference between the principals’ and the other SMT members’ responses is the view of leadership. The principals draw attention – sometimes explicitly – to the tension between their roles as visionary leaders and bureaucratic managers. While these roles are also touched on in other SMT members’ perceptions, the tension is not clear articulated.

The respondents claim that their primary role is to take the lead in whatever happens in their schools. To DP1: “My role is to be a leader and a manager. My role is to lead other educators and even learners.” They also agree that the “principal is responsible for calling meetings” (DP1, H2 and PL1-2). Although principals mention that they rotate the chairmanship role, there are times when the principal is not allowed to chair. Many respondents have also highlighted the rotation of chairmanship in the questionnaires (see page 127). H2 explains that generally “the principal is going to chair unless it is the matter that affects him directly, say for instance, a teacher has a

query against him - he can't chair that meeting somebody has to chair." To PL1-1 the principal:

> Keeps an eye on everything and makes sure that everything is done properly…because the person in charge is to make sure that everybody does enough and nobody is unhappy or disgruntled because they feel they are doing more than others.

DP1 is of the view that the principal "…must give direction and help us (SMT) where there is a problem." PL1-2 adds that principals' roles are to "…give positive feedback."

When it comes to accountability PL1-2 believes that "all teachers are answerable to the principal and the governing body." DP2 explains why teachers have to account to the principals. She says: "…we know that the principals are accountable to the District Office so each of us is accountable to the principal because at the end of the day he has to answer for every problem within the school." This is consistent with the responses furnished in the questionnaires. What emerges there is a strong sense of vertical accountability: each SMT member feels him or herself to be accountable to the person 'above', and all feel accountable to the SGB. Only in one case does the idea of being accountable to the learners emerge (see page 130).

Pl1-1 views human relations as being of vital importance and believes that her principal is doing a good job in that respect. She claims that her principal has "..a very open way of working; he (the principal) believes that people have to be kept informed so that they know what's going on and that they are happy as far as possible…"

Above all, to DP1, the principal "…must have good leadership skills…" and to DP2 "an effective SMT has something to do with good leadership skills."

H2 believes that a good principal "…is the one who allows everybody to have a chance to discuss" things. PL1-1 is confident that "he (the principal) allows us to make decisions that are important in the school." This is in line with the questionnaire response that "all SMT members are given equal opportunity to air their views" (see page 128). This was certainly borne out by my observations (see Appendix F).

To ensure effective functioning of the SMT, PL1-1 suggests, “You have to believe in your leader…”

4.8 Threats or challenges

Respondents feel that although teamwork is generally accepted, there are interpersonal differences that pose a threat to team management. DP1 speculates

> …one of the contributory factors, although I’m not clear … but I can see that the problem started long ago. There are personal grudges or vendettas of some sort so whenever there is a chance one would try and avenge…

DP2 acknowledges that there are “differences of opinions (within the SMT)…because we don’t share the same personality as a result we don’t think the same.” This leads to one having:

> …To work with a group which is difficult. For example you can hold a meeting, plan to do something, you set a date then the date comes you experience problems from the educators in submitting what is wanted and what has been planned to be submitted on that date (DP2).

To H1 the major threat is “…absenteeism…by both teachers and learners.”

Another potential threat highlighted by both the principals and other SMT members is the imposition of policies by the Department of Education onto schools. DP1 laments

> …we are always given instructions from above, the Provincial Government to the District Office from the District Office instructions come to school. So I think one of my duties is to help in the implementation of those instructions working with the teachers.

PL1-2 agrees:

> The Department sets down the criteria that we follow in managing the school. We also are bound to associations like SATA but we are restricted there on how we work and what ethos that we have in the school.

She also claims that "…the governing body expects certain standards from us."

Some members are happy to work with these directives because they give direction. DP2 says:

> There is a manual that is being used by the school, which almost informs the principal on how to run the school, it informs everybody, even the deputy and head of departments what he is supposed to do throughout the year for the school. It is helpful because it makes me know what to do – what not to do and you also know if you are following the correct direction.

And H2 is also guided by policy: "We make important decisions so we have to refer from time to time as to whether those decisions are correct – they are in line with the policy."

Another factor that emerges as a threat to team management is the need to have constant meetings. Some respondents feel that with meetings "…many people got involved with small issues…" (PL1-2).

To H2:

> Sometimes people are tired of meetings, of having to sit for meetings and sometimes we will sit after hours and then we tend to postpone meetings, we end up sometimes taking a relatively long time in finalizing issues.

And PL1-2 says:

> There were too many people doing the same job because we all have to discuss all the issues in the school and that was a huge committee and involved lots of people and so our meetings were hours and hours long.

The time factor has also been highlighted by both the principals and other members as threatening to team management. PL1-2 feels that in teamwork "…there is a fair amount of wasted time because at times it takes longer" and DP2 is of the view that teamwork "delays you because what you want could not be wanted by others…"

Overview

The two sets of interview data show marked levels of agreement, but also significant differences. The notion of the principal as the ultimate leader who has to be accountable is more prominent in the principals' responses. In general, more SMT members focused on interpersonal clashes as factors inhibiting teamwork than did the principals. Principals also had little to say about communication, a theme that emerged strongly in the other responses. Principals instead chose to highlight delegation and sharing the workload. The notion of staff members being a threat if they are excluded from decision-making emerged in both, but more strongly among the principals.

I now move on to discussing these data in light of literature and policy. Here I hope to draw attention to the significance of the key findings.

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In chapter four data were presented. In this chapter data are analysed and discussed according to the categories identified in chapter four:

- Sharing the load
- Empowerment and staff development
- Participative management
- Leadership in team management
- Threats or challenges

5.1 Sharing the load

A problem shared is problem halved – folk idiom

The respondents allude to the fact that teamwork seems to be characterised by sharing. They claim that the sharing of ideas and workload are strong advantages of teamwork. This was a strong theme in the literature reviewed in chapter 2 (see 2.1.2).

I find sharing an interesting phenomenon because people in the leadership positions seem to be selective in terms of what or what not to share (see 5.4 below). A study by Doud and Edward (in Sergiovanni 2001: 19-20) found that

> …Sharing of responsibility with teachers was found in areas of instructional improvement. There was some sharing of responsibility with teachers in the area of selection of teachers. But very few respondents reported sharing responsibility with teachers in the areas of supervision and evaluation of staff.

Selective sharing can thus be interpreted as revealing a bureaucratic, control-driven mindset. Furthermore, it is sometimes taken for granted that when the SMT, for example, is having a meeting they are necessarily sharing ideas. The danger is that this could be a mere formality and the principal might implement what s/he feels like

implementing. Everard and Morris (1996: 71) call this a failure to listen. In their terms "Failure to listen …is a game of asking people for their views in order to ignore them".

It would, however, be fair to assume that working in teams encourages sharing of ideas. Sharing ideas promotes effectiveness in teams because in schools, the SMT is likely to have a wider range of ideas than any single manager, as discussed in 2.1.2. However**,** Fullan (1993: 64) warns that "a shared sense of purpose and related concerted action is something to work toward, and is never fully achieved". My study has certainly born this out. The notion of working toward 'a shared sense of purpose' has not emerged strongly in this study, a point I return to later. Sharing is thus more than merely allocating duties to different team members. Sharing of ideas and sense of purpose therefore should be a goal all members are striving for bearing in mind that along the way there will be obstacles that need negotiating, failing which, sharing may remain a myth.

Of interest in this study is the fact that the principals I interviewed emphasised sharing and teamwork, whereas other SMT members (deputies and HODs) did not put the emphasis on sharing, but rather on communication (discussed in 5.3 below). It seems that the two parties focus on what they would like to see happening. On one hand principals highlight sharing of the workload and other administrative functions because they feel the job is too big. On the other hand the remaining members feel the need to be better informed. These differing expectations underscore the notion of teamwork being a process, rather than a phenomenon, which is never really completed.

This research also confirms that working in teams encourages support from your fellow team members, and that the team support you will get is in terms of positive criticism, advice, correction, encouragement and different ideas. Providing support is a central feature of Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership model (Hoy and Miskel 1996: 292). They are of the view that new team members need to be constantly supported and scaffolded until they are confident enough to proceed with their duties. Support emerges as a key ingredient of teamwork in the literature. Scott and Walker (1999: 50) argue that:

> Without the right form of support, … teamworking can be a little more than a token of democracy, and if schools are to optimise their use of teams, they must face up to some of the inconsistencies evident in their structures, system and processes.

Moreover Nias *et al*. (in Fullan 1993: 64) are of the view that

> When such support [is] available, individuals feel encouraged to take risks, to do something they had perhaps never done before, knowing that whether success or failure followed, they would be able to share the results with their colleagues

In schools, SMTs need to be constantly supported by all the stakeholders involved so that they can carry out their duties confidently. The Department of Education should of course be the primary source of support for the SMTs because SMT members are not trained for the managerial positions they occupy when they assume duties. Respondents revealed (see page 131) that the SMTs need to undergo formal training once appointed, and there should be ongoing workshopping of SMT members. This workshopping will update them in the developments in the field and equip them accordingly. They envisage training as very important because they suspect a lack of competency in vital managerial functions by the SMT. Mampuru and Spoeltra (1993: 15) argue

> The educational leader cannot be expected to perform his duties on a hit or miss fashion - there is an urgent necessity for educational leaders to receive both academic and professional training in educational management

As an employer, the Department of Education should provide the necessary support structures to schools. Hence the Education White Paper 2 (DoE 1996: 31) claims, “the assistance and continued support which schools will require should come from provincial, regional and district education departments”.

However, very little is done by the Department when those newly appointed senior teacher assume their duties. The department just stands aloof and watches SMTs managing their own business. All they do is issue departmental circulars which are sometimes not clear and expect certain kinds of achievement from those SMTs; the

perception is that they never help realize those achievements. The expectation is that SMTs should get formal training.

5.2 Empowerment and staff development

Many respondents view formal training as one of the ways in which SMTs can be empowered. Having acquired the necessary training, though, SMTs need not make that their prerogative. They should disseminate the information to all the relevant people. In Britain Bryk *et al.* (in Fullan 1999: 39) describe what happens at one school when teachers have learned something valuable at an outside workshop: " …the teachers (when they come back) will just call a meeting on their own, just to get together to share these ideas - No one is directing this". Clustering information and skills on certain individuals in an institution and relying on those people for advice when confronted by a problem is detrimental to the school. People not exposed to such information will be disempowered. A living example, as I speak: Last year my school bought a photocopier and only one teacher was taught (by the principal) how to use it. The principal then ordered that no other teacher in the school must use the machine because 'it will break if it is used by many people'. The teacher concerned came up with unpopular rules such as 48 hours' notice before you can have your work photocopied. This proved to be unsuccessful in that when the teacher was held up somewhere no photocopying took place.

On the other hand some informants feel that there is no need for formal training because of the dynamics of education (see page 131). They see training literally as training an animal to do something in a particular way. They will only know one way of doing it not another. Managers in that case will have rigid ways of solving educational problems, which might not always be successful. The conflict-solving tactic that was relevant in the 80s is not likely to be effective now. The solution to this, they say, is an old saying that experience is the best teacher. This assumption is workable in most of the cases because you cannot take a highly qualified teacher and make him or her a principal of the school without that background experience. This is prevalent in the township schools where you will find a principal with a three-year teachers' diploma only, but with the vast experience he or she has gathered he or she is

making a good principal. Recently in one of the interviews (for the deputy principalship post), here in Grahamstown, an Education Development Officer (EDO) stated categorically that qualifications did not count that much. He proclaimed that, “Here (in that school), we do not want a paper to lead this school; we want a person”. This shows that even though the departmental policy on requirements for a specific post is laid down, say for an example, to be an HOD, you must have three years teaching experience, practically what they may look for is an experienced person with more than ten years in the field.

At a school level the manual for school management argues for management support. This is “the degree to which managers provide clear communication, assistance and support to their staff” (DOE 2000b: 11). To communicate clearly principals should be aware of and use the correct communicating channels. Also principals should be very careful about the timing of communication. Issues should be communicated in good time – not too early or too late. This will help to create harmony in schools. The vision-crafting manual (DoE 2000c: 13) argues, “All schools establish appropriate communication channels and structures to ensure timely and effective reports-back to parents and the community about the performance of the schools”.

The team spirit highlighted as an ideal by the respondents means oneness, to me, in whatever the team does. Team members become a unit and do everything with the spirit of succeeding. Senge (1990: 352) is of the view that leaders “do not have the answer”, but instil confidence in those around them that, together, “we can learn whatever we need to learn in order to achieve the results we fully desire”. To achieve ‘everything’ the leader needs to take the initiative to enhance the potential of each and every team member. Such leaders are likely to have shared commitment as their team members. According to Sergiovanni (2001: 23) “shared commitments pull people together and create tighter connections among them and between them and the school”. To that effect the spirit of team members might be raised and team members might begin to express themselves as ‘us’ rather ‘me and the team members’. The likelihood, therefore, of SMT members not sharing the same commitments might manifest itself by members pulling in different directions, in which case strong leadership is needed. The importance of leadership is discussed more fully later in this chapter.

5.3 Participative management

Respondents view decision-making as a participatory activity where everyone concerned should be involved. Owens (2001:288) argues, "In participative decision-making, all members have the right to be heard, to have their views considered, to express feelings, to offer knowledge and information". This was very prominent in the questionnaires (see page 128) and my observations complemented this. All the meetings I observed were conducted in a relaxed manner where every member was free to voice his/her views. This is a sign of democratic management in schools. Clearly if meetings are conducted in that fashion all team members will own those decisions because "…it is only if people are involved in the process of decision-making that they will own the decision taken" (Udjombala 2002: 49). This is in line with Kurt Lewin's core principle: "We are likely to modify our own behaviour when we participate in problem analysis and solution and likely to carry out decisions we have helped make" (Weisbord 1987: 89). Lewin's principle bears testimony to the way in which people who were not involved in decision-making react. Their exclusion becomes the scapegoat and they give the impression that if they were included they could have come up with a better idea and could have anticipated the problem beforehand. The kind of assistance they give their principals is a wait and see stance (waiting for a failure).

I see the inclusion of relevant stakeholder as two-fold. In the first place, stakeholders' involvement will endorse the democratic nature of the school in which they (schools) are supposed to operate. The manual on managing and leading schools (DoE 2002b: 2) states

> The new education policy requires school leaders and managers to work in democratic and participatory ways to build relationships and ensure efficient and effective delivery…

The basic aspects of democracy are participation and involvement of people in issues affecting their lives. According to Munro (2003: 278)

> staff involvement [is] described as being about making sure that staff are involved in all decisions that affect them; from big change programmes, to the day-to-day decisions on how services are delivered.

This is an ideal democratic situation but our practical situations suggest otherwise. If for some reason the school is to be break early, for instance, it is very easy for the principal to ring the bell and call it a day. But if that suggestion could have come from below, s/he might reject it on the basis of accountability to the DoE and in the interest of learners. Some day-to-day decisions are thus subject to the mood of the principal and thus entirely undemocratic. In the second place, inclusion of stake-holder input means that the school leader is guaranteed the necessary support (both physical and emotional) and the diversity of inputs the team members are likely to come up with. More often than not principals find themselves alone and deserted because of their decisions and practices. They need to be in touch with their SMTs and inform them timeously of their intentions.

Respondents also emphasise the importance of being well informed, including knowing their roles. First and foremost, according to Sergiovanni (2001), the principal will require good communication skills. If the leader has good communication skills s/he is likely to articulate beliefs persuasively, effectively explain decisions, check for understanding, and behave in ways that reflect these beliefs and decisions (*Ibid.*: 5). If the above is to be accomplished, the leader is expected to both inform team members and at the same time to communicate his/her intentions. People need to know exactly what to do, in which case they are likely to be confident in tackling their tasks. It becomes evident that dissemination of information is of paramount importance. Therefore the principal is expected to adopt an attitude of transparency regarding information, because "a manager who believes that lower employees don't 'need to know' information isn't likely to be able to perform well in a team" (Hayes 1997: 41). This also results in 'unilateral decisions' which is perceived as problematic by the respondents (see 4.2.4).

Respondents also revealed that SMT members need to know exactly what their roles are. Studies by Bush (1995) and Lukhwareni (1995) show that SMTs are not familiar with their roles as yet. However, the SASA (1996) is very explicit about the roles and duties of SMTs. My research also found that SMT members are not sure of what their roles are. Some of the SMT members (in the questionnaires) claim that one of their roles is "to be a member". This shows that the level of participation of the SMT

members in their respective schools is very minimal. One is tempted to argue that their participation is confined to their departmental obligations. For me to be just an ordinary member suggests that other SMT members are doing the job and you are only there because your position requires you to. There is no compelling motive for that particular member to be part of the team.

The informants further suggest that leaders need to acquire good leadership skills such as listening and communication. They are of the view that leaders need to learn and listen to their constituencies. Learning from other people is a social act. According to Weisbord (1987: 94) "Involving people [is] not a 'technique,' it [is] the bedrock of social learning, requiring goal focus, feedback, leadership and participation by all the relevant actors". This is complemented by Vygotsky's belief (in Schunk (1996:213) that people learn through social interaction. Learning from what the people are saying and doing gives a leader the opportunity to assess the anticipated outcome of such an act.

On the other hand, Weisbord (1987: 91) argues, "to learn from your own experience [is] an innovative form of management education". This means that leaders need to learn through exploration. As highlighted in chapter 2, principals should feel at liberty to make mistakes because they are exploring – but should ensure that that mistake is the last!

When it comes to listening, the findings emphasise how principals need to listen to all the stakeholders when they are to make binding decisions. They need, as far as possible, to listen to the different views of different parties in order to make an informed decision. The leader, therefore, is expected to 'listen' to the members' feelings and try to accommodate them. It seems very important for school leaders to realise that through listening they could learn something new from other people.

As indicated in chapter 4, the issue of communication has not featured strongly in the principals' responses, but was prominent in other SMT members' interviews. One respondent said, "Communication is a two-way process, you must listen to your educators [and] your learners". According to Hoy and Miskel (1996: 346), "two-way communication is a reciprocal, interactive process directed toward discovery and new

understandings through speaking and listening". They continue to say, "Communication is an activity which takes place when a message is transferred satisfactorily from one party to another so that it can be understood and acted upon if necessary". The parties involved need to ensure that they both understand the message in the same context, failing which they might understand the same point differently. Therefore the key element in communication is understanding, and to understand one ought to be able to listen well. Effective communication in schools is the stabiliser because each person will be timeously informed of everything that takes place at school. These communication channels are 'warning signs' Weick (1996) is suggesting. In his words "…people need to look for diverse clues that give early warnings of impending change" (*Ibid.*: 568). In a school situation principals need to heed small issues that might lead to big problems if not attended to in time. If there is a probability of misunderstanding and conflict, the principals need not wait for those to erupt but deal with them as they arise. To be effective in that regard, principals need to strive to manage issues rather than to solve problems (Weick 1996: 570), and communication is clearly a key component of this skill.

5.4 Leadership in team management

This research has found that participants do not always think it is advisable to work as a team. Sometimes the job that needs to be done will dictate the manpower required. For example, one need not summon the whole SMT to decide how to undertake his/her teaching obligations. Or it would be ineffective to wait for the SMT meeting to decide whether to call an ambulance for the learner who has sprained his ankle during break time. It is evident that in both cases there is no need for teamwork and the decider is at liberty to make his/her own decisions. These kinds of 'unilateral' decisions should not be confused with authoritarianism because the school managers will be using their discretion. It is possible to argue that a manager needs to be able to use his or her discretion in making decisions because of the lack of clarity in managers' job descriptions. Similarly, Crawford *et al*. (1997: 137) assert

> Where other SMT members advocated a course of action which lay outside the boundaries of acceptability by the head, the latter could withdraw a decision from the SMT and make it unilaterally.

However, DOE (2000b: 15) warns:

> … you need to be able to judge when it is best to:
> Make a decision on your own
> Consult and negotiate before you make a decision
> Allow others to make a decision.

It becomes apparent therefore that principals sometimes need to make certain decisions without consulting the rest of the SMT. Munro (2002: 286) states, "…For small problems it might be a little too formal and cumbersome". Sergiovanni (2001: 189) highlights that principals may "need to make decisions in light of the unique circumstances that they face". The experience and exposure (of the principal) to day-to-day problems facing learners and staff will give him/her a basis for taking such decisions. I have learned through my research, and through my interaction with the SMT members, that having done that, the principal needs to explain his/her actions to the team. Sometimes it happens that the principal has taken unpopular decisions and in that case he/she will subsequently be asked to reverse them, failing which the SMT and the staff will disown them. This kind of decision-making is different from the type of a leadership style where the principal is dictatorial. In this kind of decision-making approach, principals are exercising their authority. It is expected of the principals to be authoritative without being authoritarian. Closely related is the type of a leadership style (and its implications) where principals are autocratic, but even this mode of leading is not as simple as it sounds.

Some respondents have favoured unilateral decision-making and implementation because it suited their management styles well. Others felt teamwork is time consuming (to be discussed later in this chapter). Yukl (1998:139) argues, "If you want it done right do it yourself' is an old expression that is still popular with some people". Some respondents would want to do the jobs themselves not because they do not trust the team or they do not have confidence in them, but to fulfil their own personal visions about the job.

However, this is contrary to the departmental prerequisite:

> It is no longer good enough for a principal to be a good administrator: s/he must be a proactive leader and manager. But in the definition of leadership and management, the principal is not expected to carry the burden of running the school alone. S/he is expected to form a school management team (SMT)… (DoE 2000b: 2).

The department here emphasises the acknowledgement and recognition of SMT and teamwork. Principals need not take everything upon themselves and administer them; they should share the work with the SMT. Not all the principals are comfortable with that arrangement though. Yukl (1998: 139) suggests that there are two reasons for the reluctance of the managers to delegate work: "insecurity and perfection".

This individualistic approach to work has been revealed by my study. Principals felt that it is sometimes easier to work alone for the reason that although a team will do the job jointly, it is faster to do it individually. Respondents suggest that principals take those unilateral decisions because there is no time to spend on convening a meeting. Also your team will not do the task as you would like it to be done. Therefore the principal will not be entirely satisfied. Casanova (2003) calls this the individual worldview. She argues, "People in this world view are concerned with the self and with the satisfaction of the self. Other people, consciously or unconsciously are looked upon as instruments for self-satisfaction" (*Ibid.*: 2). Such principals are predictable in that when they come to a meeting with an issue, you can tell from their introductions where they stand. This behaviour becomes eminent in the implementation of those decisions. If the decision favours the principal s/he will gladly implement it, but if it favours the staff and other stakeholders, s/he might even veto that decision and implement something not agreed upon. In that case the principal will be excluding the staff in decision-making.

According to Casanova (2003) the exclusion of team members in crucial decisions is for the convenience of school managers. It denies team members the opportunity to grow and develop. Yukl (1998) suggests that this lack of delegation is prevalent in institutions where the senior feels threatened by juniors who seemed enthusiastic and willing to learn. He claims that these managers are afraid that the empowered subordinates, if they know everything, will take their jobs one day. He argues, "Failure

to delegate may be the result of a strong need for power by a manager, sometimes combined with insecurity" (*Ibid.*: 139).

In my opinion this may cause problems for all those involved. Firstly the rest of the team will feel sidelined if the principal does not consult them. As a result they will not cooperate with him/her and also disown those decisions in the strongest terms, especially if the decisions fail. They will view the principal as being dictatorial and autocratic. Secondly, decisions made at management level also affect learners. Thus learners might consider those decisions as being imposed upon them. Their reaction may be to rebel against such decisions. For example, some time in 2001 we as a staff decided to send those learners who were not dressed in school uniform home. We did not involve learners in this arrangement, and as a result, their representative council of learners (RCLs) arranged a meeting with the SMT. One could tell that they were disgruntled. From that meeting consensus was reached on the uniform issue and all parties were satisfied.

Thirdly the implementer (in this case the principal) might be at loggerheads with his/her fellow teachers, and learners, because the interests and feelings of other parties were not considered and they saw the decisions as detrimental to them (Yukl 1998: 128). During the interviews, one of the respondents alluded to the fact that if the principal takes decisions that do not concern him, the respondent, (without consultation) it is fine, but if the decision will in some way concern him directly or otherwise then there will be a problem.

The difficulty experienced by the participants in practising shared decision-making may also have historical roots. The Task Team Report states:

> Principals and teachers have consistently been at the receiving end of top-down management structures. They have worked in a regulated environment and have become accustomed to receiving direct instructions from the department officials (DoE1996a:19)

The history of South Africa tells us that the legacy of apartheid emphasised hierarchy in schools. For that reason the levels of operation were independent. The lower level depended on the next upper level for instructions and carried those instructions rigidly.

This has had an impact on the general administration of schools. The principal had certain responsibilities to fulfil and was not expected to consult anyone in the school because s/he was solely accountable to the district officials for the departmental needs. It is possible to argue that independent or unilateral management is a symptom of the system's top-down past. Principals accustomed to this way of thinking will therefore find it difficult to change.

However, this kind of imposition put principals on the spot and they were subsequently facing criticism from all corners of the community. Constant criticisms together with the departmental expectations were among the forces that urged principals to want to run the schools unilaterally. As I have argued, principals who act independently are perhaps simply living out their style of leadership and management. Such principals were, and still are, not in favour of change.

One of the functions of a leader, as highlighted by the respondents, is to encourage the staff and learners. Respondents see the ability to encourage as the most important pillar of team building. And that encouragement also builds team spirit. According to Sergiovanni (2001: 101) this is one of the five 'forces of leadership' – the human force. He is of the view that

> Principals expressing this force can be thought of as assuming the role of "human engineer," emphasizing human relations, interpersonal competence, and instrumental motivational techniques. As human engineers, principals provide support, encouragement, and growth opportunities for teachers and others (*Ibid.*:101).

It becomes clear that among other duties a principal is expected to perform is to mentor the staff. Mentoring generally means "…the positive support offered by staff with some experience to staff with less experience" (Blandford 1997: 234). It goes without saying that principals have an edge over the staff in terms of skills and expertise of which they are to give to the staff. Also principals need to inspire other fellow teachers and behave in a manner that is exemplary of a visionary leader. Principals need to ensure that teachers learn; in Senge's (1990: 340) terms, principals

> …are responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and

> improve shared mental models – that is, they are responsible for learning … through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do.

As part of encouragement the respondents feel that the leader needs to come up with challenging activities. In so doing, according to Sergiovanni (2001: 169), the leader needs to "…turn problems into solutions and implement them". Such activities are most desirable in an underperforming SMT. As a matter of fact it happens that SMTs do not perform as expected; this is perhaps due to the fact that they might be bored with executing the same duties everyday. That is, they do not find the routine work challenging as a result they just rest on their laurels and no progress is made. Sergiovanni (2001: 169) further argues that leaders need to "…use their positions to recognize and reward accomplishments of both staff and students". In which case school principals are expected to publicly acknowledge work done by teachers (even if it is not a big achievement) through staff meetings and assemblies. This is likely to motivate and boost the morale of teachers because they might feel that their contributions to the school are appreciated and subsequently strive to do more. Another important task the principal is not to forget is to get the teachers to learn in the school setting. Fullan (1993: 98) asserts, "Individually and together, principals have a responsibility to upgrade the learning opportunities of all teachers in the system". If that learning environment is created, teachers might be empowered (discussed above).

Another point raised by the respondents is the question of accountability. The principals say they are accountable to the district office, deputy principals say they are accountable to the principals and HODs claim to be accountable to the deputy principals. The DoE (2001: B-2) defines accountability as "…being accountable for one's deeds as well as being responsible for and to one's institution… But according to Gunter (2001: 142) accountability is "…a two-way process". Accountability needs to be reciprocal. If for instance the principal is accountable to the EDO, then the EDO is also accountable to the principal in return. However, respondents view accountability as vertical and 'one-way' and that implies that SMTs perceive themselves as operating in a bureaucratic kind of environment where 'offices' are arranged vertically, that is, each lower office is under the control and supervision of the higher one (Weber in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 48). This is in line with Pollitt *et al.*'s (1998: 12) definition of

accountability as “a relationship in which one party is obliged to render an account of his/her actions (or the actions of a particular organization) to another party…”.

In schools it is not practical for the SMT members to operate at the same level when it comes to accountability. This is due to the positions and types of responsibilities assigned to each of them. The questionnaires revealed that that is why principals are ‘forced’ to ensure that they make good decisions (this could go as far as principals making unilateral decisions) because they are the ones who are ultimately accountable. Gunter (2001:118) asserts, “…having a SMT has been important in sharing the burden but it does not remove the public accountability for school effectiveness that is on the shoulders of the head teacher”. In this regard principals are free to account for positive things the school achieved e.g. good Matric results but feel ashamed when they have to account for negative things. One principal assured me that he feels embarrassed accounting for mistakes made by his SMT members.

Although the respondents feel that SMT members need to be equal, it becomes clear that in a democracy, accountability is one of the aspects that are legitimately undemocratic. There is no equality when it comes to accountability because the principals feel the need to maintain the supervisory status and enforce compliance to the departmental polices of which s/he is eventually accountable, as the findings revealed. According to Sergiovanni (2001) this is a traditional mode of leadership. In his terms “traditional leadership practices emphasize hierarchy, rules, and management protocols and rely on bureaucratic linkages to connect people to work by forcing them to respond as subordinates” (*Ibid.*:132). It may happen that SMT members or the staff as a whole might want a clarity from principal on something s/he has done, and in such case the principal might feel challenged. In one instance from my own experience, a principal accepted a teacher from the district office (without consulting the SMT and the staff). When asked about the status of the teacher by the staff - (i.e. is the teacher there as a loan teacher or permanently) - he seemed not to know. He then went back to the District Office and said his teachers did not want the teacher at the school premises. When the District officials visited the school to get to hear their side of the story they were surprised and concluded that the principal had blown the matter out of proportion.

The above scenario is a typical example of a problem with a vertical notion of accountability. The lower level tends to be acquiescent to the higher level, resulting in a lower level being 'afraid' of the higher level. Clearly approaching the District Office openly for clarification would have been the appropriate course of action.

The need to move away from autocratic and 'nervous' leadership thus emerges strongly. Bass (1990: 417) argues that autocratic leaders "discourage subordinates' contributions to the decision-making process and pay little or no attention to subordinates' needs", and clearly this is undesirable behaviour in teamwork. According to Hayes (1997: 74) "It is vital that all team members share the vision, because otherwise they are likely to find themselves working at cross-purpose or unable to reconcile basic conflicts". I now turn to the question of vision.

5.5 Vision and absence of vision

The question of vision received little attention in my findings. This is partly because no direct questions on vision were asked and the respondents' answers subsequently did not touch on their visions. However, many opportunities were there where it could have emerged and should have emerged if the notion were really part of their philosophy. The fact that it did not emerge strongly may indicate that questions like - *What is your role in the SMT?* and - *In your opinion, what makes an effective SMT? Why?* were not answered as anticipated, or they might have elicited the visionary aspect of team-working. This suggests that respondents, especially the principals, perhaps do not consider vision-building to be central to their roles as leaders, or do not see vision as a major characteristic of teamwork. It may also, of course, simply be a factor of the unrelenting pressure brought about by the plethora of policies introduced over the past decade, which may well lead to a compliance mind-set, rather than a creative and innovative one.

According to the literature, the starting point for true teamwork should be the crafting of a school vision. School vision is the fundamental aspect of strategic management and is at the top of the school transformational model (see DOE 2000c: 9). Vision crafting is a "…process, beginning with an event, which brings together every stakeholder in

the school community" (DOE 2000c: 9). A typical example of such an event is the official opening of the school where each and every stakeholder has a duty to perform in ensuring the success of that event. Another one would be the changing of school uniform – everyone needs to have a say in that regard, whether it is in terms of colour or texture of the uniform. A school vision has a capacity of changing the status quo of an institution. Hence the training manual on vision crafting (DoE 2002c: 79) argues, "A collective vision is the bond established among community members by merging individual desires into a collective will to succeed". The school community therefore should strive towards having a common goal and vision, because two visions will create a division. Once people are divided or do not share the same vision they will portray what Harris *et al.* (1997) calls the common fallacy. They claim "assuming people are uncooperative, when in fact they may have different goals" (*Ibid.*: 20) is a fallacy. People work according to their visions of the job and try to fulfil it.

Literature suggests that each principal should have his/her vision about the school and should see it pursued. It would be unwise though for the principals to push for their personal interests because "…neither principals as strong 'unilateral leaders' or principals as 'weak followers' are relevant to the future role of the school as learning organizations" (Fullan 1993: 73). The important issue with schools is that they are learning organisations and learning itself is a continuous process. Therefore school leaders need to take the future state of the school into consideration when they themselves have left the school. No one principal is a principal for life. The manual on managing and leading schools (DoE 2000b: 45) asserts:

> The school needs a vision and a mission statement because the principal and the governing body will change over time. Changes can be disruptive unless the school has a clear direction and everyone has a shared idea about what the school is trying to do.

The school vision therefore acts as a pointer and a stabiliser in cases where the SMT leaders are in constant change. If the school has a vision, regardless of the changing leaders, the community will know where they are heading. To reconcile the school vision with the new principal's vision can be problematic in the sense that the principal would want to come up with his brilliant ideas which might be in contrast to the school vision. Likewise the school community might want to continue with their vision.

According to Senge (1990: 352) this is normal, and he believes that, "In a learning organization, leaders may start by pursuing their own vision, but as they learn listen carefully to others' visions they begin to see that their own personal vision is part of something larger". According to Bolman and Deal (1993:9) the solution is for the new principal to understand the school's existing vision first and develop a new one borrowing from the old.

Another factor highlighted by the informants is that as a leader your team members must know what you are about – your intentions. In other words team members must trust and share the same vision as their leader. Hayes (1997: 73) argues, "…Sharing of the common vision of the work is regarded…as being the defining characteristic of a team". Harris *et al.* (1997: 20) further argue, "Cooperation and teamwork require clarity of joint goals and expectations and constant monitoring of outputs versus the agreed targets". It becomes apparent that visions from all those involved must be discussed upfront to curb any chances of misunderstanding.

It is possible to argue that the absence of vision discourse may be part of the legacy of apartheid which seems to have left the schools' stakeholders with the perception that they are separate entities although operating in the same school. The schools emerge as having imaginary territories where each section operates independently of others within its boundaries. The principal has his/her domain and does not want any 'intruders' in terms of challenging his/her ways doing things because s/he does not expect to account to or consult anyone in the school. Teachers are selective as to whom to account to. They are only accountable to their superiors. Each of these stakeholders pursues different goals and objectives, pulling in different directions. They do not see themselves as equal partners who have a valuable contribution to make in trying to better their school. Even now there is no true transformation: learners are still regarded as 'minors' and not as equal partners in education (Nongubo 2004: np), however contrary this may be to our democracy which calls for full participation.

The question of vision is closely related to sharing discussed earlier in this chapter. It may be that where sharing is little more than allocating duties to alleviate the principal's burden it would be more appropriate to speak of 'groups' rather than 'teams'. In chapter 2 Belbin's (2000) distinction between groups and teams drew

attention to the special qualities that characterise teams, such as purposive selection of members, working within a joint vision, and shared leadership (see 2.1.1.). It is possible to argue that the teams in this study are teams in the making only. Membership is linked to rank and position (by and large), leadership emanates mostly from the top, and their rationale for being seems mostly linked to role allocation.

5.6 Threats or challenges

The need for on-going training emerged strongly in my findings. The problem I see with SMT members' lack of training when they assume managerial positions is that they tend to succumb to 'older' members when it comes to decision-making and implementation. Furthermore the saying, *When in Rome do as the Romans do*, becomes the order of the day. During an informal chat with one of the newly appointed SMT members, he told me that during his orientation period, the new SMT members are told that the 'old' members do things in a certain way. When they ask why the answer is that this is how things are done, and have always been done. In certain situations new members are not really accepted because older members see management as a legacy. Hence Harris *et al.* (1997: 17) claim that many organisations "…fail to outlive their founders". Naturally in these circumstances the school cannot grow and develop because it uses old ideas that may or may not be effective. Van der Westhuizen (1991: 5-6) argues:

> The management training of the educational leader should comprise two aspects, namely basic management training (the academic professional component) followed by a management development programme (in-service training).

It is a fact that teachers, when they are promoted to senior posts, are not trained as managers but as teachers. For that reason, the bureaucratic style of management used during the apartheid period suited them well, because they just implemented and administered what came from above without questioning it. It is this complacency and acquiescence that renders the SMTs dysfunctional because they are the ones who are directly involved at school level and they know the needs of the school community better. The department on the other hand might want to implement programmes that seem effective, but are practically not applicable.

Lukhwareni (1995) is also of the view that SMTs need to be trained because untrained SMT members will find themselves in confusion. He also urges the DoE to constantly provide guidance and support to the SMTs and above all make them aware of their roles in school management. The department proclaimed that it would be successful if "all members of SMTs attend managerial and development programmes" (DoE 2000c: 13).

If training of SMT members is in the interest of the Department, one wonders why it takes so long to accomplish. As a teacher myself I am aware of the Department's attitude of dragging their feet in attending to educational imperatives. Seemingly the Department is running education with little, or no, resources because the funds seemed to be insufficient no matter how much the finance minister can allocate them. The Task Team Report (DoE 1996a: 31) argues, "…it is vitally important for local department, as a matter of urgency, to develop teams of support staff with sufficient expertise and resources to offer good management support to schools". Judging by the look of things this recommendation will take long to be realized because the department's priorities are not same as the schools'.

On one hand it becomes evident that training, although not yet provided, is fundamental to people in the management position. On the other hand the department is issuing manuals, guidelines, and circulars that stipulate exactly what is to be done and when to do it. The alarming thing is that school managers are operating independently of those directives. This raises suspicion as to whether they (school managers) are able to interpret the documents and put them into practice or whether they ever consult them when they are confronted by problems. The conclusion I would draw from my general observation and exposure to such situations is that those documents are never read. Even the EDOs do not read the departmental policy documents. Two years ago a teacher shot and killed someone in the township and was subsequently arrested. The EDO, handling the case departmentally, charged the teacher wrongly (under a wrong regulation and section) and the teacher escaped prosecution. However, on the 21 August 2003, at a principals' meeting at a local school, the Departmental official addressing the principals, announced, "As principals you should know the departmental documents from cover to cover just as you know your Bibles from Genesis to

Revelations". He added, "so that you [principals] can apply them to situations that would need them".

It is clear that the department is aware of the fact that school principals are not familiar with the departmental policies, but the very same department is doing nothing about that. The department does not follow up on new policies to be observed by the schools and evaluate its intended purpose. If it did, it should have detected that and employed alternative measures. As the case now stands neither party is doing enough.

Training for SMTs is offered in other countries. In Philadelphia for instance Crawford *et al.* (1997: 134) confirm, "In one authority there were courses for newly appointed deputies". One would speculate that such courses are beneficial, effective and sustainable. But what is important is the nature of the course and what those deputy principals take out of the course. The courses should take into account the context of the people and try to build upon it. However, even in Britain government support has never been conspicuous. Hence Fullan (1999: 81) argues, "…School systems are not known for their capacity to seek and incorporate new ideas, and there is no strong external infrastructure that supports schools in this regard". To me it is clear now that the lack of valuable support of schools is a universal problem and district offices are doing little about that. One would be tempted to think that it is a norm that schools should not be given all the resources they will need to carry out their daily duties. Or perhaps it is what Kurt Lewin once suggested, "It is better to give people a few boundary conditions and let them solve the problem than to hand them ready-made solutions" (Weisbord 1987: 97), in which case schools may be expected to learn to improvise.

My findings suggest a lack of willingness to be creative and act independently. Creativity has proved to be problematic and its absence seems to have played its role in schools' apparent inability to transform themselves. This is so for a number of reasons: Firstly, because of the past experiences and the way in which black schools used to operate, schools were not ready to operate on their own. Secondly, the lack of resources and personnel made it difficult to fulfil their duties. Thirdly, the lack of strategic management by the school management denied the school the opportunity of attaining Section 21 Status, since they lack the skill of managing their finances and other assets

of the school. Lastly, the kind of management approach that seemed to be difficult to let go in some of the school managers contributed to schools' inability to act creatively. Everything was supplied by the DoE and schools subsequently developed a 'dependency syndrome' and were dependent on the DoE, and hence the DoE decided for the schools what was best for them.

Management development courses have also been offered in this country, and indeed in this province (The Eastern Cape). Research in progress (Madasi 2004: np) on management development has found that

> management development is done without the necessary follow up, support and monitoring after the implementation stage and evaluation of the programmes and this renders the programmes ineffective in some schools.

The research reports that "participants are frustrated by the lack of support and monitoring and complain about the invisibility of the EDOs in their schools" (Madasi 2004: np). This study also finds that training is in the form of seminars, which is 'talk' and no workshopping. Munro (2003: 287) asserts, "Involvement in the workshops [leads] to increasing confidence among both groups and a greater willingness to deal with each other on workplace issues and use the problem-solving procedure". Fundamental to these concerns is the lack of evaluation of the programmes. Evaluation is the last stage of management cycle. It is unfortunate that the EDOs seem not to know that learning something is actually doing it. I find the findings of this study a true reflection of what the Departmental officials are doing. They only visit schools when they are to issue circulars, and never monitor if the schools are adhering to them or not.

Another issue arising from the findings is linked to the political nature of schools as organisations. Principals are faced with a challenge of satisfying everyone in the school failing which s/he is going to be boycotted. This is because of the political nature of the school climate they work under. Bush (1995:87) states "leaders have their own values, interests and policy objectives which they seek to advance as appropriate…". However they are to take into account that if they do something contrary to what their subordinates expect of them then they know the repercussions thereof. So they have to be very careful when they are to take any action; they must involve everyone otherwise teachers might be insubordinate. This kind of oppositional leadership makes principals

reluctant to try new things, but seek to please their subordinates for the sake of the smooth running of the school.

This kind of political attitude increases the chances of disloyalty amongst SMT members and subsequently renders the principals reluctant to delegate duties to other members of staff. This fear of 'letting go' is the result of the lack of trust among themselves, and principals are conscious of the threat of 'sabotage'.

Another issue is the matter of policies. As discussed in chapter 1, South Africa is currently in a post-policy phase, and education in particular has been characterised by a plethora of new policy over the past decade. It seems the effect of policy is two-fold. On the one hand, policy provides the reason for acting. This is evident in the reasons given for establishing SMTs (see page 128). On the other hand, departmental policies are perceived as a problematic because they are not always workable and thus restrict the creativity of the school management.

The picture that emerges is thus both complex and sometimes contradictory. In the next chapter I present the main issues emerging from my findings as part of the conclusion of this study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In chapter 1 I identified my research goals as follows:

The purpose of this study is to explore SMT members' experience and perceptions of team management, and hence their roles in managing their schools. Flowing from this, my sub-goals are to explore team effectiveness and the composition and general functioning of SMTs.

It is now appropriate to consider to what extent these goals have been met.

6.2 Summary of findings

Generally the picture elicited by this study is that the concept of SMTs is a positive development. The participants' perceptions are generally favourable and they welcome the development, though many argue that it is essentially nothing new. Their responses indicate several positive attributes of team management.

SMTs have brought the phenomenon of teamwork to the fore, and teamwork is perceived to have many advantages. Chief of these seem to be the notion of sharing, both of the actual 'load' of management as well as sharing human resources. Principals are strongly of the view that SMT members need to share everything, especially the responsibilities.

Coupled with this is the idea of support, which the participants feel is very much part of the notion of teamwork. Teamwork also brings about a broadening of vision, since it is not the leader's vision only that needs to be accommodated.

To the respondents SMTs are supposed to work as a unit. They view team spirit as a unifying factor that instils confidence in team members. More importantly, principals need to 'guarantee' team building.

In general, the responses confirm some of the views discussed in chapter 2 regarding the advantages of teamwork (see page 14).

However, underlying this positive response are sets of tensions, challenges and needs which make the actual practice of teamwork potentially problematic. As was discussed in chapter 2, time and effort arose as strong disadvantages, since broad consultation and the need for constant meetings are time-consuming and require dedicated commitment.

There are also tensions with regard to leadership, arising from the dual nature of education leadership: on the one hand, principals are expected to work in teams with democratic principles and develop shared visioning and management, but on the other hand they see themselves as the ones who are ultimately accountable. This tension can result in principals' reluctance to delegate and 'trust' the team, since failure on the part of the team will lead to personal loss of face and embarrassment.

SMT members' projection of how they see a school leader is interesting, since they clearly stress the human development aspect of leadership. As a school leader, principals are expected to encourage staff and learners. The ability of a leader to encourage other members is a characteristic of good team building. Also they need to mentor the staff and encourage staff members to study. Principals need to inspire their staff and lead by example. Principals need to ensure that they come up with challenging activities because it might happen that underperforming SMT members are bored with their daily routines. It is also expected of the principal to, where possible, empower teachers. This is in the form of delegating certain duties to the teachers. Above all principals need to undertake pastoral work at schools. The principal needs to be a good listener – s/he must learn to listen to his/her staff and learners before making any significant decision.

Interpersonal problems also emerged as a potential threat to teamwork. The diversity of personalities can be detrimental to the team if not managed properly. These include personal agendas of individual SMT members which may result in infighting amongst them, thereby working against the well-being of the team.

Policy implementation is also perceived as a potential threat, since it may restrict the scope of the SMTs' ways of managing the school. Participants cite policy as reasons for their action and conduct, but at the same time feel restrained and even overwhelmed by the extent to which their work has become policy dominated.

It is therefore not surprising that some participants feel that it is not always advisable to work as a team. Sometimes principals favour working 'solo' because it suits their management styles, or for fear of failure, as discussed above. Clearly this tendency is at odds with current thinking on participative leadership and management. According to Sergiovanni (2001: 69) empowerment is a basic principle of organizing. In his words "…feelings of empowerment among teachers contribute to ownership of and increase commitment and motivation to work". While it is understandable that principals are sometimes reluctant to delegate, this tendency feeds into an already demoralising picture. Government's decision to cancel paid study leave, for example, has done away with a valuable opportunity for self-empowerment. In the current climate of retrenchment, forced redeployment, ineffective training courses, a principal not committed to staff development is only making matters worse.

Another potential threat is expressed in the strong need on the part of SMT members to be informed, and to know exactly what their roles are. This suggests a weakness in the area of communication and work allocation. Communication is also stressed as one of the needs expressed for school leaders to be open to their SMTs and for the SMTs to know their intentions. This is seen to lead to collective decision-making. Respondents view decision-making as a participatory activity where each and everyone concerned should be involved.

When it comes to accountability, each SMT member claimed to be accountable to the next level. Principals said they were accountable to the District Office, deputy principals claim to be accountable to the principals and HODs said they were

accountable to the deputy principals. This kind of accountability is problematic. The lower level tends to acquiescent to the higher level. This vertical kind of accountability is in contrast to what Gunter (2001: 142) believes; for her accountability is a "two-way process". In her view accountability is reciprocal, that is, if A is accountable to B then B is also accountable to A. Interestingly, with accountability there is no equality. Hence principals to some extent are forced to agree with the issue first before endorsing it because they are the ones who need to account at the end of the day. The general picture portrayed by the SMTs is therefore quite bleak in terms of their understanding of accountability. This outdated and authoritarian understanding reveals how narrowly they understand the concept. Not surprisingly though, this is in line with my other findings, such as the impoverished view of vision, the preference of principals to go 'solo', and poor communication.

Another major obstacle to team management is the political nature of schools, and staffrooms in particular. As this study has shown, principals sometimes include colleagues in decision-making for the wrong reasons, acting out of fear rather than a commitment to openness and democracy.

The question of vision was only marginally addressed in my findings. This is partly because there were no direct questions asked in that regard. School vision is the fundamental aspect of strategic management and is on top of the school transformation model (DoE 2000c:9). The school vision has the potential of transforming a school. It is also like a compass that shows the direction. For it to be fully legitimate, all the school's stakeholders must formulate it. If all people concerned are involved they will adopt ownership of that vision. According to Senge (1990: 340) "people with a sense of their own vision and commitment would naturally, reject efforts of a leader to 'get them committed'". A vision acts as a source of motivation and people working according to their vision do not need any form of external motivation. The fact that is was given so little attention points to a deeper problem of ownership and the philosophy of teamwork.

Training emerges as a strong need. Respondents felt that they are not well equipped to assume managerial positions and that renders them ineffective. Exposing them to new developments in education will place them in a better position to tackle current

problems. Management and leadership training is a prominent feature in most countries, including South Africa, but the perception is that the programmes on offer have accomplished little. Perhaps the over-reliance on training to solve problems and bring about empowerment is another factor of the problem revealed in the respondents' narrow understanding of accountability.

In summary, although almost all the SMT members are speaking the 'right language', i.e. they are aware of the democratic concepts, they seem less aware of their roles in terms of democratising the educational management. This suggests a fundamental lack of understanding of the concept of teamwork (as well as shared vision). The sense of 'ownership' referred to on page 22 seems largely lacking, particularly when respondents seem so reliant on 'policy', so trapped by 'accountability', and so set on acting 'correctly'. It may be that the apartheid legacy has yet to be overcome, and still leaves educational managers overly dependent on their 'superiors'. This has led school managers to under-rate themselves and to be scared of trying new ideas. Perhaps they need more time to get to grips with the true democratic principles that are nowadays a prerequisite of any organisation, to allow the change process to get under way.

It may thus seem premature to refer to the SMTs in this study as 'teams'. Perhaps the notion of teamwork is too new, or perhaps the hold of the past is too strong. It may be more accurate to describe them as teams in the making.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

Although some work has been done on SMTs, I strongly feel that the practice of team management needs further investigation. In my study there are a number of research areas that came to light, but were outside the scope of this study. I would like to refer future researchers to the following:

This study did not focus on the composition of the SMTs. It would be of value if a study could be undertaken to look at how SMTs are composed and what impact that kind of composition has in terms its operations.

The issue of gender was also not looked at in this study. It would be interesting to find out whether female managers have different perceptions of team management, and whether female leadership styles may lend themselves more to the notion of teamwork. The manner in which principals communicate with their SMT members needs scrutiny. It would be worthwhile to interrogate how principals convey and receive information from their SMTs. Respondents in this study highlighted the need for communication and being well informed, suggesting that there may be communication breakdowns in team management.

The actual effectiveness of SMTs needs to be scrutinized. This study focused on perceptions only. It would be important to track the actual impact SMTs have on school development, for example, are decisions taken at meetings acted upon? How, and when?

The most urgent and serious need for research is the underlying cause of the impoverished and narrow understanding of teamwork that emerged in this study. A study of this nature may be best undertaken as action research, perhaps organisational development, to make it possible to uncover the deeply rooted sense of dependency and anxiety among school managers.

6.4 Recommendations for practice

It is now appropriate that I make recommendations to the district office, principals and SMTs respectively.

6.4.1 Recommendations to the District Office

District Office's role is clearly to provide support, chiefly in the shape of development programmes that develop people in their totality. Programmes that expose and develop managers' sense of reliance on each other and joint management would go a long way towards addressing needs expressed in this study. District Office also needs to provide

on-going support in the form of experts who visit schools to mentor principals and other managers.

6.4.2 Recommendations to the principal

Principals need to be aware of the importance of consulting their SMTs, not merely for fear of opposition, but because it is the democratically correct way to operate. Ownership will only develop in people who feel valued.

Openness is crucial for trust and real teamwork to develop. SMTs members need to be aware of principals' intentions. Principals also need to encourage teamwork to acknowledge the democratic nature of the school and most importantly to have a broad base of inputs.

SMT members need clarity on their roles beyond the mere description of duties. It is their role as team-member that needs to be developed by the principal.

Principals need to accept that empowering staff members is their responsibility, and therefore should delegate without fear of failure or embarrassment. The notion that one learns through making mistakes needs to be embraced.

6.5 Limitations of my study

This study did not set out to observe team management in practice, and is therefore heavily reliant on views expressed by respondents and the few observations I was able to conduct. The study is therefore open to the same validity threat most qualitative case studies suffer from. I trust that my use of more than one data source, as well as the rigour of my data reporting and discussion addresses this threat sufficiently.

The study is also, of course, not statistically generalisable, though the picture painted here would probably be found to be true of many areas in South Africa.

6.6 Conclusion

The fact that the concept of team management is so positively received is encouraging and perhaps provides a sound foundation on which to build. One cannot doubt that there is a strong need to develop democratic practices.

However, in the light of what this study has found, it is evident that educational management in South Africa lags behind what the Task Team Report envisaged in 1996. Educational managers appear to have a narrow understanding of their roles in school management for the many reasons discussed above. Until this understanding matures there will be no true ‘team management’ in South Africa.

This study can hopefully play its role in highlighting problem areas, which could lead to programmes and interventions which develop educational managers who still lack the confidence to lead in democratic ways.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS (SMTs)

PART 1

Years in that position: 1-5year 6-8years 9-15years 16- +30years

Gender: Male Female

Marital status: Single Married Widowed Divorced Other

Home Language: Xhosa English Afrikaans Other specify ----------

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PART 2

2.1 Do you have a SMT?

If your answer is No please ignore questions 2.2 to 2.7

2.2 When was the SMT established?

2.3 How many SMT members do you have?

2.4 What are the ranks/positions of your SMT members?

2.5 What led to the establishment of the SMT?

2.6 What was your role in the establishment of the SMT?

2.7 How did you become one of the SMT members?

2.8 In your opinion, who should constitute the SMT? Why?

PART 3

3.1 How often do you meet?

3.2 Who convenes the meeting?

3.3 Who chairs your meetings?

3.4 Who decides what should be included on the agenda?

3.5 Do you use a quorum system?

3.6 How long, on average, do your meetings last?

3.7 Is every member given equal opportunity to speak?

3.8 How do you reach decisions?

3.9 How do you implement those decisions?

3.10 Can any SMT member modify decisions taken when implementing them?

3.11 If “Yes”, under which circumstances is s/he allowed to modify them?

3.12 If you do not agree on a particular issue, what do you do?

3.13 Do you always report to the entire staff after every meeting?

If no, can you think of any issue(s) that you need not report to the staff?

PART 4

4.1 Has the SMT brought about any change(s) in the management of the school? Please elaborate

4.2 What is your role in the SMT?

4.3 To whom do you think you should be accountable?

4.4 Presently, to whom are you accountable?

4.5 Do you feel that you are involved in managing your school?

4.6 If “Yes”, how are you involved in managing the school?

4.7 How do you feel about sharing responsibilities with the rest of the SMT?

4.8 Do you think you are ready to manage your school?

4.9 Do you think SMTs need to have formal training?

Why/why not?

PART 5 (For SMT Members at or below post level 2 only)

5.1 How would you describe the leadership style of your principal?

5.2 How does this style affect you?

5.3 Does the principal ever take decisions on his/her own without consulting with rest of the SMT?

5.4 If yes, how do you feel about those decisions?

5.5 What is the role of your principal in the SMT?

PART 6

6.1 What do you consider to be the key roles of the SMT in terms of managing the school?

6.2 In your opinion, what makes an effective SMT?

6.3 What do you suggest can be done so that SMTs can be effective?

6.4 Are you aware of any policies and laws that provide a framework for the running of schools?

Please elaborate (mention a few and explain their role).

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Data are arranged in accordance to the questions and subsequently elaborated on.

- Why SMTs?
- The constituency of the SMTs
- How can you become a SMT member?
- SMTs' meetings
- How do SMTs implement decisions
- Confidential issues
- What changes have been brought about by the SMT?
- SMT's accountability
- The involvement of SMTs in management
- SMT training
- Roles of the SMTs
- Effectiveness of SMTs
- Laws and policies guiding the SMTs' functions

Why SMTs?

First the respondents believe that SMTs have been there for a long time, but have only recently formalized them (SMTs) in line with the departmental expectations. Second most of the respondents had no role in the establishment of the SMTs. However some SMT members have been highly involved, such as setting up structures and procedures, and convening and chairing of meetings. The overwhelming reason for the establishment of the SMTs relates to: school needs, better management and the departmental policy. The schools realized that they needed a larger body that can co-manage and ensure smooth running of schools. The introduction of the SMTs in schools is viewed as one of the contributory factors in the improvement of school management. The next question would be how huge must this body be? The answer follows.

The constitution of the SMTs

All respondents agree that the SMT should be constituted by first and foremost the principal of the school, then the deputy principal (if there is one) and the heads of

departments (HODs). Many SMTs claim to be presently using this kind of a structure. Also in some cases teachers with experience and expertise are co-opted into the SMT to augment it. In a single case two learners serve on the SMT. However the present SMT feel that some other stakeholders should also be included in the SMT. These include teacher unions and other leading teachers in the school such as grade coordinators and other conveners. The answers furnished by the respondents show that there is no fixed number of the SMT. SMT membership varies. Some SMTs have three and others have ten. This discrepancy is determined by the capacity of different schools. By the numbers provided, it is evident that not all people in the school can be in the SMT; therefore the need to find out who should be in becomes an imperative.

SMT meetings

Because of the dynamics of the schools, not all the SMTs use a quorum system in holding meetings. In some cases it is either all members are present or the meeting is re-scheduled. In other situations it depends on the urgency of the matter at hand. However, almost more than half the respondents use a quorum system.

The respondents have various meeting times, the majority claim that they meet weekly. It is clear that more often that not the circumstances dictate their meetings. The average time is about 76 minutes.

In all those meetings the principals convene and chair them, in whose absence the deputy chairs. However the principal is at liberty to nominate any SMT member to chair at any given time.

The answers also reveal that all SMT members are given equal opportunity to air their views in whatever issue that is being discussed. Furthermore all SMT members decide what is to be included in the agenda. In some cases though the principal decides but consults with the rest of the team before the meeting starts - for additions and subtractions.

How do SMTs implement decisions?

The respondents agree that to reach decisions issues are first debated, discussed at length and the resolutions are reached through consensus. If they do not agree on a particular issue they do the following:

- Re-convene the meeting and involve the staff
- Go for the policy
- Principals make the ruling
- However if the situation dictates, members resort to voting and take the majority decisions.

The answers show that decisions taken are implemented differently. Some implement decisions through communication and delegation. The dominant way possible here is to implement decisions via the staff. Resolutions taken are referred to the staff for approval and subsequently implemented. The staff can be informed either verbally or in writing. There is a mixed feeling when it comes to the modification of decisions in implementation. Some feel very strongly that under no circumstance must the decisions be modified. This might cause distortion. In some cases it might cause a confusion of the subordinates. However if someone feels like changing the context of the resolutions, s/he must consult the rest of the team and find a mandate to modify them; failing which it is the breach of decisions made. On the other hand some respondents feel that it is proper to chop and change the decisions. This is feasible in circumstances where: there is something unclear in the decisions, there is error in the decisions and in circumstances beyond one's control.

Confidential issues

Informants claim that they report to the entire staff after every meeting they hold. This is done to get the staff's input in order for the SMT to implement the agreed upon decisions. However, there are some issues that need not be reported to whole staff these include: sensitive, personal, pertinent, issues involving other staff members and confidential issues.

Changes brought about by SMT

Some informants feel that there is not much change brought by the SMTs. They see it as a slight change. Furthermore they claim that the SMTs do not have power because they report to the SGB. Nevertheless most of the informants agree that SMTs have brought significant changes in the management of schools. Changes include the following:

- School are run more effectively
- SMTs are involved in policy formulation
- SMTs give direction
- Teachers own ideas
- Management is productive
- Management is participatory
- There is consistency
- There is more delegation
- There is more accountability

SMTs' accountability

The informants view accountability in terms of ranks and positions they hold. The HODs are accountable to the deputy principals; the deputy principals to the principals and the principals are accountable to the SGB. But I must hasten to say that they all acknowledge that they should be accountable to the SGB. In one case the SMT is accountable to the learners.

The involvement of SMTs in management

All informants unequivocally announce that they are ready to manage their schools. They also claim to be involved in managing their schools. Their involvement is in:

- Planning
- Disseminating information
- Decision making
- Implementation of decisions
- Providing leadership
- Monitoring programmes
- Managing programmes

- Supporting new staff member(s)
- Delegating
- Accountability

But some informants feel that their inputs are undermined and consequently not implemented. One informant laments, “My involvement is paralyzed by the fact that none of my suggestions are tried or implemented…”

SMT training

The overwhelming majority of informants feel that SMTs should undergo a formal training (specifically in management skills). The reason being if SMTs are not trained they tend to be complacent. Also they (SMTs) tend to be responsive rather than proactive. But if they go for training they get empowered. Also the education itself is not static so they must be abreast of the managerial issues of the day. In some cases though, SMTs feel that formal training leads to rigid ways of approaching problems.

Roles of the SMT

The respondents view the below mentioned as the key roles of SMTs, above all they should be in line with the departmental policy.

- To set the tone of the school
- To be transparent
- Managing conflict
- Provide innovative ideas
- Take crucial decisions
- Provide leadership
- Give support
- Planning

Effectiveness of SMTs

For the SMTs to be effective the following is suggested:

- Teamwork

- Transparency
- Encourage change
- Share responsibilities
- Cooperation
- Trust
- Collective leadership consistency
- Communication
- Openness
- Leading by example

To achieve the above-mentioned the following is suggested:

- Management of SMT meetings
- Implementation of collective leadership
- Follow-up on issues discussed
- Undergoing training and workshops
- Education department involvement
- Focus on the vision
- Tolerance
- Healthy working relationships

Laws and policies guiding the SMTs' functions

The SMTs are conversant with the laws and policies that provide a framework for managing schools. The South African Schools' Act (SASA) is the most known and used document. Principals claim to be using a manual for school management. Other documents consulted are employment equity act, employment of educators act and labour law.

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about your experiences in management and administration of your school?

2. Tell me about the appointment procedure you underwent (how do you feel about it?)

3. In your opinion, who should constitute the SMT? Why?

4. Has the SMT brought about any change(s) in management of the school? /What change(s) has the SMT brought about in management of the school?

5. What is your role in the SMT?

6. How are roles allocated?

7. What do you perceive to be your role in management of the school?

8. Is working in teams better than working individually? Why, or why not?

9. Do you feel that you are involved in managing your school? How?

10. In your opinion, what makes an effective SMT? Why?

11. What do you suggest can be done so that SMTs can be effective?

APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE (SMT-MEETINGS)

School: ---------- Date: ----------

When is the meeting taking place? ----------

Where is the meeting taking place? ----------

How many SMT members present? ----------

Composition (How many males and females?)----------

Any apologies----------

Who chairs the meeting? ----------

Are members present taken? ----------

Is there a secretary? ----------

Is there an attendance register? ----------

Are the previous minutes read? ----------

Are matters arising from those minutes dealt with? ----------

Do they entertain A.O.B (any other business)? ----------

If the chairperson is the principal, does s/he dictate the meeting? ----------

How long does the meeting last? ----------

What is the agenda? ----------

How do they start their meeting? (e.g. with a short prayer)----------

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Do they finish the agenda? ----------

Is there a post level 1 educator, leaner, parent or any other non-SMT member present? -

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Does everyone have a chance to speak? ----------

Does the chairperson dominate the discussion? ----------

Are SMT members not intimidated / feeling shy to speak? ----------

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How are they seated? ----------

Do the members contribute? ----------

Is the members' contribution welcome and appreciated? ----------

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How are decisions reached? ----------

If they do not agree on a particular issue what do they do? ----------

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APPENDIX E
OBSERVATION DATA

Observations

Out of the nine schools I was supposed to be observing, only five schools fulfilled their promise. Three of them were the former model C schools and two were 'township' schools. In all the schools I observed, I used an observation schedule. I observed one SMT meeting from each school.

Summary of the observations

Data are presented according to the observation schedule.

Some of the SMT meetings took place during school hours and others after school hours. Most of them took place in the principals' offices; only one was held elsewhere in the school. The attendance was 100% in most cases; in a single case it was 50% (other SMT members were engaged in another important meeting in the school). In one school all the SMT members were males (all learners are boys), in another females (all learners are girls) and in the remaining cases both sexes were represented. The principals declared the meetings open in all cases and in one case the principal opened with a short prayer. The meetings ended by the principal thanking everybody but in the case where the meeting was opened with a prayer, he closed it with a short benediction. The SMT members were seated randomly in a circular fashion with the principals among them but in one case the principal was sitting at his desk.

In all cases the principals chaired the meetings. Out of the five schools, three had a SMT secretary, and in other two schools members made notes for themselves. No attendance register was taken. In three schools no previous minutes were read and in one school each SMT member had typed minutes from the previous meeting, and one member read them. In two schools copies of the departmental circulars were distributed among SMT members. There were no matters arising in the three of the schools because no minutes were read from the previous meeting. In two of the schools there were matters arising.

When the meetings were in progress, the principals were not dictatorial whatsoever in all the cases. There were no 'A.O.B.' items in two of the schools but in the remaining three there were. The duration of the meetings varied according to the different agendas the schools had. Meetings lasted between 20 and 90minutes. In one of the schools I could not stay to the end of the meeting because there was a sensitive issue to be discussed that concerned a learner and her parents. I had to be excused and observe confidentiality. However, the principal said I could come back later (when the parents had gone).

The agendas of the schools I observed did not differ significantly in the sense that most of the items discussed were administrative issues. These were issues such as examinations (exam papers, dates and timetables), admission of learners, fees, educational administration, subject statistics and assessment. Other matters were sport oriented, theft, children's safety and fundraising (e.g. bazaar). In one school although no agenda was read to the SMT, what they talked about was:

- A boy bought liquor and consumed it in the hostel
- Next year's year plan/time table
- Computer room – to be used in the afternoon
- "A.O.B." – scoreboard blocking the way of the spectators.

In the cases where I observed the meetings to the end, the agendas were completed.

There were no learners or parents at any of the meetings, but there were post level 1 teachers in two schools. In one school the post level 1 teacher was the SMT secretary. In the rest of the cases all SMT members were post level two and above. Everyone had a chance to voice his/her views freely. There were no signs of the SMT members feeling intimidated and reserved. In two cases the principals dominated the discussions but the members contributed positively too – all of them. The members' contributions were very much welcomed and appreciated. To reach decisions the SMT members gave their views and agreed on a particular issue. Each member had a say on whatever issue was being discussed and decisions were reached through consensus. If they did not agree on a particular issue they weighed the facts and found the most effective solution.

In one case their meeting led to action because members reported back on specific tasks they had to do.

APPENDIX F

PERMISSION LETTER

16 January 2003

The Principal

…

Dear Mr …

Permission to conduct research

Mr Zakunzima Tyala (student number 00T2251) is engaged in research for his Masters degree in Education Leadership and Management. In order to conduct his research he will need access to yourself and members of your school staff. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of his research interest, and gain your permission for him to continue.

The focus of Mr Tyala's research is School Management Teams. He is particularly interested in how this relatively new concept in school management is experienced by members of organizations. He hopes to administer a questionnaire to your senior staff, observe one or more SMT meetings, and interview a selected few.

This project carries my full blessing, and I believe that he is likely to produce findings that may be of value to academics and professionals in the field. It would be particularly important for him to glean the perceptions of experienced managers such as yourself. I therefore ask that you help to "open doors" for him by granting permission to approach members of your staff, and encouraging them to participate freely. Naturally his findings will be made available to you. Also, for ethical reasons, his research will be conducted in strict confidentiality and research participants will remain anonymous.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. Please feel free to approach me should you have any questions.

Sincerely

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht
(Supervisor)