

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP
ROLE IN A SUCCESSFUL RURAL SCHOOL IN NAMIBIA**

Submitted by

UERIVANGERA CHRIS TJIVIKUA

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters in Education
(Education Leadership & Management)

DECEMBER 2006

ABSTRACT

Rural schools are faced with numerous challenges and are often perceived to be academically unsuccessful. However, in spite of this perception there are some which manage to beat the odds by being academically successful year after year. This peculiar phenomenon of 'unequal performance' among rural schools struck my interest; hence my decision to investigate what it is that successful rural schools do to keep afloat in a turbulent environment where others around them collapsed. As the literature suggests that leadership play a key role in the success of an organisation, I focused my study on how the leadership role of the principal makes a rural school thrive.

The study is situated in the interpretive paradigm and attempts to reveal participants' perceptions and experiences of the principal's leadership. My participants were the principal, circuit inspector, the School Board Chairperson, a Head of Department and the LRC president. These people were purposefully selected; the principal was selected because he is the one executing the roles hence he would be better informed about them while the others due to the positions they occupy, work closely with the principal. The research is a case study as it focused on a single case, and for data generation I employed semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis.

The study revealed various characteristics that describe the leadership role of the principal. An overarching characteristic that emerged is that the principal is a *balanced leader* - he focuses on both task completion and consideration for people. Different characteristics that emerged from this balance leadership portrayed the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School to be a transformational and an instructional leader who believes that teaching and learning are the central activities of a school. Moreover he has been painted to be a team player and a servant leader who holds and practices the principle of ubuntu. The principal has also been described as a strategic and exemplary leader. It emerged that his exemplary leadership has moulded the practices of teachers

and learners into a shared culture that supports academic excellence. The findings also depicted a paradoxical picture of the principal in that while he exhibits democratic procedures he is also perceived to be autocratic.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated in memoriam to my grandmother and mentor, *Prescilla Hindjou*. I have been blessed with many wondrous things, but growing up under your care has enabled me to realize my other blessings, hence it was the best blessing of all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I thank God, the almighty, for I believe if it was not for his will, this study would not have been possible.

Secondly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the following people for their immense contribution to my professional growth at Rhodes University: Professor Hennie van der Mescht, Dr Clive Smith, the course co-ordinators; Judy Cornwell (librarian); and my two fellow full time students: Martha Niitembu and John Kovach.

Professor Hennie van der Mescht, my supervisor, in particular deserves a special acknowledgement. His guidance and motivation was indispensable to my study. He has delineated virtues of a genuine servant leader and a humanitarian which did not go unnoticed.

This work would not have been possible without my respondents at Ruacana Senior Secondary School (the principal, the inspector, the HOD, the LRC president and the School Board Chairperson); to them I owe appreciation and gratitude.

To Martha Megumbo Niitembu, you have been a source of inspiration and a tremendous pillar of support.

To my wife, Muaaruu, without whom I would not be living my best life, thank you for putting up with all the trouble during my absence; and to our children, Mommy and Tita, I owe you gratitude and appreciation for your understanding.

And to all the others people that I could not mention due to limited space, thank you and may God bless you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| ABSTRACT | <i>i</i> |
| DEDICATION | <i>iii</i> |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | <i>iv</i> |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | <i>v</i> |
| CHAPTER 1 | <i>1</i> |
| OVERVIEW | <i>1</i> |
| 1.1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.2 CONTEXT | 2 |
| 1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY | 3 |
| 1.4 GOALS OF THE STUDY | 4 |
| 1.5 THE RESEARCH APPROACH..... | 4 |
| 1.6 THE RESEARCH SITE AND SAMPLE | 5 |
| 1.7 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS..... | 6 |
| CHAPTER 2 | <i>8</i> |
| <i>Literature review</i> | <i>8</i> |
| 2.1 INTRODUCTION | 8 |
| 2.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL | 9 |
| 2.3 THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES OF RURAL SCHOOLS | 13 |
| 2.4 LEADERSHIP | 15 |
| 2.5 THE TASK/PERSON TENSION..... | 17 |
| 2.6 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP APPROACH..... | 21 |
| 2.7 SUBSTITUTES FOR LEADERSHIP | 23 |
| 2.8 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP | 25 |
| 2.9 CONCLUSION..... | 27 |

CHAPTER 3..... 29

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY..... 29

3.1 INTRODUCTION 29
3.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM..... 29
3.3 THE RESEARCH METHOD..... 30
3.4 THE RESEARCH SAMPLE 32
3.5 DATA COLLECTION 33
 3.5.1 Interviews..... 33
 3.5.2 Observation..... 34
 3.5.3 Document analysis 35
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS..... 35
3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS..... 36
3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY..... 37
3.9 CONCLUSION..... 39

CHAPTER 4..... 40

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS..... 40

4.1 INTRODUCTION 40
4. 2 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE PRINCIPAL..... 42
4. 3 BALANCED LEADERSHIP 43
 4.3.1 The principal monitors and controls 44
 4.3.2 The principal is a dedicated leader..... 45
 4.3.3 The principal is time-conscious 45
 4.3.4 The principal focuses on teaching and learning..... 47
 4.3.5 The principal adheres to rules and regulations 48
 4.3.6 The principal is autocratic..... 50
 4.3.7 The principal is a team player..... 52
 4.3.8 The principal is humane and compassionate 54
 4.3.9 The principal values and believes in respect for human dignity..... 55
4.4 DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES 56
4. 5 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP 56
4. 6 CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE LEADERSHIP ROLE 61
 4. 6.1 The principal is visible in the school 61
 4.6.2 The principal leads by example 62
4.7 CONCLUSION..... 64

CHAPTER 5..... 66

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 66

| | |
|---|------------|
| 5.1 INTRODUCTION | 66 |
| 5.2 BALANCED LEADERSHIP | 67 |
| 5.3 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP..... | 69 |
| 5.4 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP..... | 71 |
| 5.5 DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES VERSUS AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP..... | 74 |
| 5.6 COMMUNITY METAPHOR | 76 |
| 5.7 SERVANT LEADERSHIP..... | 79 |
| 5.8 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP..... | 82 |
| 5.9 LEADING BY EXAMPLE | 85 |
| 5.10 CREATING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE | 87 |
| 5.11 CONCLUSION..... | 89 |
| CHAPTER 6..... | 92 |
| | |
| CONCLUSION..... | 92 |
| | |
| 6.1 INTRODUCTION | 92 |
| 6.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS..... | 92 |
| 6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY..... | 96 |
| 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE..... | 97 |
| 6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH | 98 |
| References..... | 100 |
| | |
| APPENDIX A | 105 |
| | |
| APPENDIX B | 107 |
| | |
| APPENDIX C | 109 |
| | |
| APPENDIX D..... | 111 |

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to gain a clear understanding of how the leadership role of a principal contributes to the academic success of a rural school. Being a product of rural schools myself in that I have schooled and taught in rural schools, I have been exposed to the strength and weaknesses of these schools. Hence, although the societal perception is that rural schools are bound to perform poorly because of lack of resources, I believe they can perform better if not excellently despite these challenges. My argument is supported by the annual results statistics of grades 10 and 12 in Namibia which in recent years have revealed that: while some rural schools justify the societal perception that they are ‘stuck’ in the poor performers category, others continually defy this perception by being amongst the best performing schools in the country. These rural schools that manage to perform well while others around them collapsed have strengthened my argument that a school does not necessarily need material resources to thrive, there are other aspects at the school’s disposal that if put to good use can help the school to prosper.

Ruacana Senior Secondary School, situated in the Omusati region is one such school that has succeeded against the odds, hence my decision to use it for a research site. I wanted to find out precisely what it is that the principal of this school does to make the school succeed which his/her counterparts in the neighbouring schools do not.

1.2 CONTEXT

It is an undeniable fact that rural schools face numerous challenges. The conditions of these schools are directly related to aspects such as poverty in communities, material deprivation and lack of teachers in critical subjects (Christie 2001: 40). However, while the literature suggests that communities' problems and influences are the drawbacks of rural schools, Capper (1993) in her study of *Rural community influences on effective schools practices* argued that:

Rural community influences are not immutable, and communities can both constrain and enable structural and cultural aspects of the schools which shape effective instruction, depending on large part how the school mediates the community's influences.

Similarly Christie's (2001) study of resilient schools in South Africa found that there are schools in rural areas that do have good academic results year after year despite facing the same challenges as other schools around them. My study will explore some of the factors underlying this phenomenon of 'unequal' performance, or, put differently, what it is that makes the difference.

One factor that could be 'making the difference' is leadership (Christie 2001: 48). My own experience of schools as organisations suggests that schools may appear to be similar in terms of appearance and the routine of activities; yet in terms of effectiveness there can be significant differences. It seems that 'small differences make big differences.' The small differences – which may be imperceptible at a glance – could lie in the different leadership styles and approaches adopted by the principals. Bob Ojeda the manager of LA Dodgers baseball team as quoted in Davies (2001: 205) summed up the secret to their success as follows: "We've been working on the basics because, basically,

we've been having troubles with the basics.” This quote provoked a curiosity in me in terms of what the basics could be in the context of schools and whether all principals especially in rural schools work on their basics. The answer that I arrived at is that the ‘basics’ in the context of schools could be teaching and learning which are also referred to as the ‘core business’ of the school. Indeed, it is my belief that without working on these ‘basics’ little can be achieved in rural schools. However this is what the study set out to investigate.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Although there are many studies on the leadership role of the principal in effective schools, very little research has particularly focused on rural schools. This trend could be attributed to the fact that researchers were not interested in rural schools as there were only a few that were successful. However I was intrigued by those few rural schools that manage to rise above the challenges and produce good academic results. My decision to investigate how the leadership role of the principal manages to make the school thrive in context of adversity was triggered by the suggestion in the literature that the success of a school is by and large attributed to the quality of its head.

Although a case study cannot claim generalisability, I believe readers will find the findings of this study useful and applicable beyond this case. Similarly it is my hope that principals in rural areas, inspectors of education in charge of schools in rural areas as well as officials of the Departments or Ministries of Education in different countries will find this study illuminating.

1.4 GOALS OF THE STUDY

My research study was chiefly driven by the following two goals:

- To explore participants' perceptions and experiences of the principal's leadership role in a successful rural school.
- To explore how the principal perceives his leadership role to contribute to the success of the school.

As the study set out to find what it is the principal does to make the school prosper, the intention was to determine how crucial the leadership role of the principal is in a rural school.

1.5 THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Since my study explores participants' subjective perceptions and experiences of the principal's leadership role in a successful rural school, I found the interpretive paradigm appropriate for my study. The interpretive paradigm is related to *hermeneutics*, a theory which originated from the Greek God Hermes, and which literally means to make the obscure plain (Neuman 2000: 70). Thus it is my belief that this paradigm would help my study to reveal and make plain the obscured perceptions and experiences of my participants. The obscured perceptions and attitudes are not facts but feelings of participants as the interpretive paradigm gets inside the person in order to understand from within the person how he/she perceive the phenomenon under investigation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000: 22). Therefore I used the interpretive paradigm to understand the participants' individual interpretations of the principal's leadership role at Ruacana Senior Secondary School.

As my investigation sought to understand a particular phenomenon in a particular case I chose the case study research method. Yin (2003: 13) claimed that:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

The case I studied is the leadership role of the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School.

1.6 THE RESEARCH SITE AND SAMPLE

My research site had to be a rural school with a good academic performance as my study aimed to investigate the principal leadership role in a successful rural school. Therefore Ruacana Senior Secondary School appeared to be the ideal site for my study as it is situated in the rural area, hence faced with challenges and circumstances associated with rural schools and it is an academically successful school. According to Jorgesen in Nongauza (2004: 10) the site is chosen on the basis of the opportunities and convenience it provides the researcher to conduct the investigation.

My sample comprised the principal, the circuit inspector, the school board chairperson, a head of department and the LRC president. I chose the principal because I thought he would be able to describe his leadership role better than any other person while the other four people were chosen because they are in leadership positions which underpin the principal leadership role at the school and hence would have informed insight into the leadership role of the principal in terms of what he does to make the school thrive. The sampling of my study was purposive because it was done with a purpose in mind that of identifying a particular type of case for an in-depth investigation (Neuman 2000: 198).

I used three data collection tools viz. interviews, observations and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews and observation were the primary instruments for data generation while document analysis was a secondary data generation instrument. The selection of these three instruments was intended at ensuring that a bigger picture of the phenomenon would emerge as they will help each other in confirming the data.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The thesis takes the following format:

Chapter 1 deals with the general overview of the research. It outlines the research approach such as the research goals, research site and sampling as well as motivation for the study.

Chapter 2 looks at the theoretical framework underpinning my study, developed through a review of literature related to the concepts of leadership, successful/effective school and the challenges facing leadership in rural schools.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological structure of my study. It outlines the research method, paradigm and the data gathering methods I used to collect the data. Ethical issues and data analysis are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is the presentation of data which was drawn from interviews, observation and document analysis. The data is presented in a raw form to enable the reader to hear the voices of the respondents.

Chapter 5 is the discussion of the findings *vis-à-vis* the research goal, questions and the literature. The discussions have been captured in themes that interpret how the principal's leadership role is perceived to make the school thrive. The findings that emerged are linked to literature and other research done elsewhere.

Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary of my main findings. I highlight limitations of the research and make recommendations arising from my study as well as suggestions for further research. The list of references also forms part of this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis is to investigate the leadership role of the principal in a successful rural school in Namibia. In order to carry out my study successfully, I need to have an overview of the particular aspects that will guide my study; hence this chapter will be presented in the following stages: the characteristics of a successful school, leadership challenges of rural schools, the leadership concept, task/person tension and the development/evolution of leadership theories over the years, instructional leadership, substitute for leadership and organisational culture.

First, before I delve into the discussion of the leadership role of a principal in a successful rural school, I need to shed light on what characterizes a successful school and in my explanation of the characteristics of a successful school, I use the words “successful” and “effective” interchangeably for I consider them to be analogous.

The leadership role that I will investigate is embedded in a rural school; hence this chapter will look at the leadership challenges facing principals in rural schools as well as the leadership concept itself. The concept leadership carries extraneous connotations that create ambiguity of meaning as researchers define leadership according to their individual perspectives and the aspect of the phenomenon of most interest to them.

However there is considerable similarity in the numerous definitions given to the concept which this chapter will reveal (Yukl 2002: 2).

The task/person tension has always characterized empirical studies of leadership theory; hence a brief exposition of the origin and applications of these fundamental dimensions to leadership warrant discussion in this chapter. The evolution of leadership theories will also receive substantial attention in this chapter dating back as far as 1904 to the most recent contemporary leadership theories.

Instructional leadership is one of the leadership models that do not necessarily focus on the process of leadership, but rather on the direction of leadership as it focuses on teaching and learning which are regarded as fundamental activities of successful schools. Therefore together with the notion of substitute for leadership and organisation culture, they will have separate sections in this chapter. The notion of substitutes for leadership emphasizes professionalism among teachers and culminates from the metaphor of community in a school while organisation culture stems from the values and beliefs shared by the members of the organisation. Organisation culture has a bearing on the effectiveness of the school as it shapes leadership in much the same way as it is shaped by it. This chapter seeks to explore how these two concepts influence and guide each other.

2.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL

Quality performance is one of the distinguishing factors between successful schools and not successful school. Potter & Powell (1992: 5) argue that a successful school is a school that has a proven ability to satisfy external criteria, such as the demands of the ministry of education, parents and students, and does well against comparable institutions in key areas of performance such as examination results. Sergiovanni (2001: 163) similarly emphasizes learner achievement, arguing that “an effective school is understood to be a

school whose students achieve well in basic skills or basic competency standards as measured by achievement tests.”

However, the notion of *success* is not only confined to *quality performance* but also to the construct of *quality education*. Clearly successful schools provide quality education to learners. Coetzee and Le Roux (2001: 210) said the term “quality education” has a dual meaning as contained in its fitness *for* purpose and fitness *of* purpose. They claimed that, when the education system in the school functions within the vision and aims of the school, then we can say the school is fit *for* its purpose. However that alone does not qualify a school to be regarded as a school of quality until we introduce the term fitness *of* purpose (*Ibid.*). Fitness of purpose means that the stated goals or aims accord with the universal task or purpose of the school, “that is initiating the learner into an inherited tradition of knowledge and normative empowerment (a competence for life), within a particular context” (Coetzee and Le Roux 2001: 210). This argument suggests that the type of education offered in successful schools does not only enable learners to progress from one grade to the next (performance driven), but also consider the aspect of equipping learners with knowledge and skills that will make them competent for life. Learners leave school with knowledge and skills that will enable them to uplift their own socio economic standards as well as that of their communities.

In their quest to attain quality performance and quality education, successful schools become achievement oriented as Oakes (in Preedy 1993: 29) argued that although teaching and learning are at the heart of any school’s activities, successful schools can be distinguished from the rest on account of *pressing for achievement*. Teachers expect their learners to achieve and learners, in turn, find themselves stretched and challenged in the classroom. These teachers never lose sight of their learners’ potential; they believe in the brilliance and ability of all their learners.

Similarly Fullan (2005: 58) asserted that successful schools have a much more demanding culture such as hunger for improvement, promoting excellence, holding hope for every child, while the less successful schools have less of a press on improvement and are forgiving if results are not forthcoming.

Relationships between the principal and teachers, teachers among themselves and teachers and learners are crucial in a successful school. Goodlad (in Preedy 1993: 29) postulated that relationships is a significant area in which a successful school makes a contribution, if there is an absence of conflict between learners and teachers, often there is some kind of mutual respect or rapport. Potter and Powell (1992: 11) substantiated the absence of conflict in successful schools when they claimed that there is a good discipline in successful schools, achieved through the maintenance of safe and sensible rules. Care and concern for others are key ingredients in any relationship and leaders of successful organisations possess that secret key to success in relationships. In an interview with Kouzes and Posner, U.S. Army Major General John H. Stanford, said the following about the secret to success in life:

The secret to success is to stay in love. Staying in love gives you the fire to ignite other people, to see inside other people, to have a greater desire to get things done than other people. A person who is not in love doesn't really feel the kind of excitement that helps to get ahead and to lead others and to achieve. I don't know any other fire, any other thing in life that is more exhilarating and is more positive a feeling than love is (Kouzes & Posner 2002: 399).

Christie asserted that a culture of concern within a school includes:

Forms of leadership that takes the views of others into account, personalized relationships where students were known by their names to at least some teachers, concern for the well-being of students inside as

well as outside of school, discipline that involved parents, and focus on engaged teaching and learning (2001: 53).

Successful schools are presumed to have visionary leaders. A visionary leader inspires workers within the organisation, relates well to individuals outside the organisation, and sets the direction for the organisation in order to enable the organisation to cope with change (Wallace, Jr. 1996: 4). Davidoff and Lazarus (2002: 55, 57) described the vision and mission of a school as follow:

The vision is a picture of the school in its ideal form; a picture towards which all the role players in the school can aspire and with which they can identify.

The mission expresses the will and intent of the school. It is the visible what, how and why of the vision ... this is what we believe in, or stand for, or building toward... and this is how we intend to accomplish our aims.

The creation of a shared vision in a school may not only give a clear indication of that school's intended direction, but it may also serve to identify that school's intentions regarding the implementation of the curriculum. The principal of Amakholwa High School in Pietermaritzburg said among other things the following when he was interviewed by Educationalive newsletter about tips for successful schooling:

Every year at the end of the first quarter our standard ten teachers and pupils organize a meeting whereby they formulate goals and objectives for the year and these goals and objectives are used for motivational purposes during the course of the year (Educationalive April 1995: 12).

Setting targets or goals is a very important feature in any school that would like to associate itself with success, as targets map the way forward and align whatever is to be done in the school in the direction of accomplishing the set targets.

The Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development (Department of Education, 1996: 29) emphasized the value driven mission:

The approach we are advocating emphasizes that everything is driven by the values and mission of the school and that these are developed and owned by more than just the principal, or some outside authority. A true culture of teaching and learning, as well as a supportive management culture can only thrive in a school where the major stakeholders feel ownership of the school's mission and ethos. However it is insufficient merely to adopt a formal mission statement. The mission statement is only useful to the extent that it provides a visible symbol of what the teachers, parents and students in the school really believe in.

Successful schools are not only presumed to have visionary leaders but also excellent leaders (Wallace, Jr. 1996: 4). An excellent principal is one who:

Creates an environment for teachers and students that optimizes learning; removes barriers to learning by protecting learning time for students; review the educational progress of students through careful analyses of grade reporting, standardized tests, and other indicators of students' progress; visit classrooms frequently to communicate interest in their welfare and progress to students and teachers; and observes and confers with teachers to improve the quality of instruction delivered to students (*Ibid*: 7).

Since this study focuses on rural schools I need to consider the special challenges that rural schools pose for school leaders and managers, and I deal with this in the next section.

2.3 THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES OF RURAL SCHOOLS

The challenges of rural schools are not only challenges to the school leaders but challenges for the whole society as suggested by Nelson Mandela in an abstract from his note in the book *Emerging Voices* which reads as follow:

I have often said that the most profound challenges to South Africa's development and democracy can be found in its rural hinterlands. These areas, systematically and intentionally deprived of the most basic resources under apartheid, continue to lag behind the rest of the country in the post-apartheid era. Foremost among the challenges facing rural South Africa is the task of improving the quality of education (HSRC: vii).

It is common knowledge that the society shares the same sentiment with Mandela, that rural schools are bound to have poor academic results because they face numerous challenges, such as lack of resources like:

- Inadequate textbooks
- Shortage of learning and teaching aids
- Lack of and over-crowded classrooms
- Lack of laboratories and libraries
- Lack of furniture (desks and chairs)
- Shortage of relevant and qualified teachers

Beside the above-mentioned shortcomings, teachers in rural schools rarely get adequate advisory support from subject advisors and both teachers and learners also do not have access to the latest technology (computers, TV's) etc. According to a report on education in South African rural communities - *Emerging Voices* - schools in these communities are "as much an aspect of rural development as they are a symbol of development" since the lack of basic services such as electricity and water is a feature of both the community and the schools (HSRC 2005: 77). Children in rural areas have to attend to household chores first in the morning before they go to school which is often a long distance from home, and this culminates in the learners coming to school tired or even late (*Ibid*: 44, 47).

Since rural communities are hard hit by poverty, schools charge a meager fee in school development fund and some parents due to socio-economic reasons still do not afford this

meager fee. This results in the school not having enough money to buy the basic necessities which the school may require (HSRC: 50).

Some isolated communities have placed a challenge of combined grade teaching/multi-grade teaching on principals as sometimes learners for a particular grade are so few that they cannot form a class. However, since it is the ministry's obligation to ensure that every child has access to education, schools are forced to resort to combined/multi-grade teaching (Titus 2004: 18). In his study of the implementation of multi-grade teaching in rural schools in the Keetmanshoop Education region (Namibia), Titus (2004: 68) established the following challenges for leadership in rural schools:

- The principal has little or no time to do proper supervision, meet parents or even do administrative work as he or she is also having a class to teach.
- Parents meetings rarely succeed as many parents stay far from school and are immersed in the bread and butter activities (farming activities) that they do not get time to come to school meetings.
- The high illiteracy rate among parents has created an inferiority complex in the parents to the extent that they feel coming to school meetings is a waste of time as they will have little or nothing to contribute.

These challenges although perceived in a single case, are likely to be universal and are issues that make the task of running rural schools a challenge to a principal.

2.4 LEADERSHIP

Leadership in organisations including schools is a very important phenomenon considering the role it plays in the creation, survival, growth, and decay of organisations (Conger & Kanungo 1998: 3). Leadership is not a new concept, but rather one of the

world's oldest preoccupations and universal phenomenon in that it can be perceived in humans as well as in many species of animals (Bass & Stogdill 1990: 3-4).

Many authors claim that the concept leadership does not have a definite/specific definition, Bass and Stogdill concurred with this claim by suggesting that:

There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept... Nevertheless, there is sufficient similarity among definitions to permit a rough scheme of classification. Leadership has been conceived as a focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviors, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as initiation of structure and as many combinations of these definitions (*Ibid:* 11).

Yukl (2002: 2) confirmed the similarity suggested by Bass and Stogdill when he posited that:

Most definitions reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization.

Kouzes & Posner (2002: 394) asserted that a good leadership role requires the leader to first and foremost lead himself, "you can't lead others until you've first led yourself through a struggle with opposing values". They made this point more explicit when they said:

Engineers have computers; painters, canvas and brushes; musicians, instruments. Leaders have only themselves... It's about leading out of what is already in your soul. It's about liberating the leader within you. It's about setting yourself free (*Ibid:* 390-391).

The dimension of relationship is a very strong feature in leadership, because in order to lead you need to be followed, if you are not followed than you are not leading. Followers are keen to follow a leader when there is a good interpersonal relationship as Cawood and Gibbon (1985: 3) put it:

To lead means basically to be out in front, to go ahead with the intention of being followed... The word lead strongly denotes an interpersonal relationship between those who go ahead and those who follow. A leader then, is one who not only leads but who is also followed.

Hence leadership is first about relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow, because success in leadership is a function of how well people work and play together (Kouzes & Posner 2002: 20 & 23).

2.5 THE TASK/PERSON TENSION

Following early attempts to characterize leadership in terms of leaders' characteristics (the trait approach) and the counter-argument that leadership will always be shaped to some extent by the organisational context (the situational approach) (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 376-377) leadership theory has been characterized by a concern with 'task/person' orientation on the part of the leader (Stone, Russell & Patterson 2004: 355). Task-oriented leaders emphasize task whereas person-oriented leaders concentrate on developing good relationship with subordinates. The task/person tension, developed by the behavioural scientists in the 1960s, suggests that the leader's behaviour is concerned with initiating structure on one hand and consideration on the other. Yukl (2002: 50) explains these terms as follows:

Consideration: The leader acts in a friendly and supportive manner, shows concern for subordinates, and looks out for their welfare. Examples include doing personal favors for subordinates, finding time to listen to subordinates' problems, backing up or going to bat for a subordinate, consulting with subordinates on important matters, being willing to accept subordinate suggestions, and treating a subordinate as an equal.

Initiating structure: The leader defines and structures his or her own role and the roles of subordinates toward attainment of the group's formal goals. Examples include criticizing poor work, emphasizing the importance of meeting deadlines, assigning subordinates to tasks, maintaining definite standards of performance, asking subordinates to follow standard procedures, offering new approaches to problems, and coordinating the activities of different subordinates.

An example of the behavioural science approach to leadership is Blake and Mouton's model which advocates a balance of the two dimensions. They claimed that effective managers have high concern for both people and production (Blake and Mouton 1964: 142). The 'Managerial Grid' (Blake and Mouton 1964) postulates 81 possible orientations in terms of these dimensions, 9 for task orientation, and 9 for person. The theory is that a score of 5.5 represents both moderate task and person orientations, while 9.9 is the ideal position where the leader scores high in both dimensions.

This approach to leadership is described as 'transactional' in that it involves an exchange process between the leader and followers, the leader gives his/her followers a consideration and he/she gets production in return from the followers. This suggests that good relationships between the leader and followers is a prerequisite for task completion, nevertheless the leadership theories that have evolved over the years have rarely delineated equilibrium in the two dimensions.

Transformational leadership which was developed by Burns in 1978 breaks with task/person tension in that it is a holistic approach which emphasizes the organisational objectives as well as the development and empowerment of followers. According to the

literature the fundamental characteristic of transformational leadership is the normative and motivational influence of value. Transformational leaders use their charismatic, enthusiastic nature to garner influence and raise followers to higher levels of motivation and morality. When the school becomes a moral community, it provides for moral connection among teachers, heads, parents, and students and it advocates helping all of them to become self – managing (Sergiovanni 2001: 33). According to Bass (1990: 319) transformational leadership has an aspect of social exchange:

Although transformational leadership may transcend the satisfaction of self-interest, nevertheless, the dynamics of leadership-followership have most often been explained as social exchange... the leader gives things of value to followers such as a sense of direction, values, and recognition, and receives other things in return such as esteem and responsiveness.

This social exchange suggests that although transformational leadership is known to focus more on organisational objectives, it has a dimension of consideration too which confirms the absence of tension between the task and person.

The social exchange aspect of transformational leadership must not be confused with transactional leadership in that, transactional leadership occurs when leaders “exchange promises of rewards and benefits to subordinates for the subordinates’ fulfillment of agreements with the leader” (Bass: 1990: 53). Tracy and Hinkin (in Stone 2004: 350) added that “transactional leadership is based on bureaucratic authority, focuses on task completion, and relies on rewards and punishments. In transactional leadership, both parties’ needs, the leader’s need for task completion and followers’ needs for consideration are satisfied as the leader recognizes followers’ needs and then defines the exchange process for meeting those needs (Daft in Stone 2004: 350).

Many writers used transformational leadership and charismatic leadership orientations interchangeably, but despite their similarities there are important distinctions between them (Yukl 2002: 240).

Charismatic leadership is characterized by a form of influence based on follower perception that the leader is endowed with exceptional qualities (Yukl 2002: 241). Yukl made this point explicit:

A charismatic leader has profound and unusual effects on followers. Followers perceive that the leader's beliefs are correct, they willingly obey the leader, they feel affection toward the leader, they are emotionally involved in the mission of the group or organization, they have high performance goals, and they believe that they can contribute to the success of the mission (*Ibid*: 244).

Since followers idolise the leader's *charisma*, the relationship between them and the leader becomes stronger and hence they commit and dedicate themselves to the task as they do not want to disappoint their leader. Conger & Kanungo (1998: 157, 158) proposed that:

Charismatic leaders increase their "likable" qualities in the eyes of followers by formulating a set of idealized, future goals that represent an embodiment of a perspective shared by followers and that appear to satisfy their needs. The more idealized the future goals advocated by the leader, the more discrepant they become in relation to the status quo, and the greater the discrepancy of the goal from the status quo, the more likely is the attribution that the leader has extraordinary vision, not just ordinary goals.

The vision has to represent an embodiment of a perspective shared by followers in an idealized form for the leader to be characterized as charismatic (*Ibid*: 54).

In contemporary leadership theory there is a shift from the leadership notion of emphasizing tasks to one of emphasizing relationships. The concept of *servant leadership* which was formulated by Robert Greenleaf in 1977, has received substantial attention in the contemporary leadership field and seems to have a relation/similarity with

transformational leadership, although there appears to be a difference in the leadership focus of the two leadership paradigms (Stone 2004: 349). Both *transformational* and *servant leadership* emphasize a high concern for people and for production, however, “transformational leadership incorporates a greater emphasis upon production because the leader has a stronger focus on organisational objectives, while on the other hand servant leadership involves a high concern for people because the primary focus of the leader is upon his/her followers” (*Ibid*:356). Lubin (in Stone 2004: 355) proffered that in servant leadership:

The leader’s first responsibilities are relationship and people, and those relationships take precedence over the task and product. Servant leaders trust their followers to undertake actions that are in the best interest of the organization, even though the leaders do not primarily focus on organizational objectives.

Transformational leadership and servant leadership must not be regarded as antithetical but rather as complimentary paradigms as leadership today is no longer concerned with the completion of tasks only; the prevalence of good relationships between the leader and followers has become a very important feature in leadership and the same is true for the development and empowerment of followers.

There are other leadership models which do not necessarily focus on the process of leadership, but rather on the direction of it, in that they emphasize a particular aspect of an organisation such as instructional leadership that I will discuss next.

2.6 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP APPROACH

Many studies of effective schools emphasized instructional leadership as one of the features of effective schools. It is the driving force behind the principal to ensure that

effective teaching and learning take place in a school. Cawood and Gibbon (1981: 7) described instructional leadership as follow:

Instructional leadership is a process of guiding and encouraging the teacher along a path towards greater professional effectiveness. Such guidance demands very careful, far-sighted and effective planning, based on professional insight and constructive and accurate analysis of the teaching-learning activity.

DeBevoise (in Mathews and Crow 2003: 32-33) defined instructional leadership as “those actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning.” Mathews and Crow made DeBevoise’s point clear by stressing that instructional leadership is not a role of principals only, but teachers’ role too as they are the ones who are actively involved in the learning process and hence understand their own and students’ needs better. Bush and Glover (in Bush 2003: 16) explained instructional leadership more explicitly when they asserted that:

Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behavior of teachers in working with students. Leaders’ influence is targeted at student learning via teachers. The emphasis is on the direction and impact of influence rather than the influence process itself.

Principals who possess instructional leadership show concern for students and what teachers do by being visible, they walk around the school to observe how teaching and learning are occurring and when there is something positive occurring, they will tell the teachers that they are doing well (Blase & Blase 1998: 106). The principal’s informal class visits or wandering around has the following distinct purposes:

- To motivate teachers
- To monitor instruction
- To be accessible and provide support
- To keep informed (*Ibid*: 108, 109).

Although some theorists argue that instructional leadership paradigm underestimates other aspects of school life such as socialization, pupil welfare, self esteem, organisation building, etc. Bush (2003: 16) asserted that instructional leadership is a very important paradigm as it targets the school's central activities, which are teaching and learning.

Kruger (2003: 207) suggested the presence of the following aspects in a school in order for instructional leadership to succeed:

- All the role players value the processes of teaching and learning;
- Practices reflect a commitment to teaching and learning;
- The resources needed to facilitate the process of teaching and learning are available;
- The school is structured to facilitate the processes of teaching and learning.

In order for these aspects of instructional leadership to really take root in the school, teachers need to inculcate in themselves internal motivation which will enable them to work harder and longer not because the principal says so, but because they are working toward realising a goal that they believe in. Once teachers adopt this attitude direct leadership will become less important, self-management will begin to take hold, and substitute for leadership will become more deeply embedded in the school (Sergiovanni 1992: 45).

2.7 SUBSTITUTES FOR LEADERSHIP

To understand substitutes for leadership, we need to have a thorough scrutiny into the two metaphors for schools, viz. schools as organisations and schools as communities. Sergiovanni (1992: 41) distinguished the two metaphors when he said: leadership in organisations is control driven and hierarchical levels are used to pass down instructions

whereas in a community, norms provide the school with substitute for direct leadership. In organisations principals are presumed to be more knowledgeable than teachers while conversely communities are defined by their repositories of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed cement for uniting people for a common cause (*Ibid.*). Fielding (as cited in Waghid 2002: 2) stressed that what constitutes a community is not necessarily the bond of closeness amongst members of the organisation, but rather a human engagement which trigger a sense of caring among the members and involve a mutual action whereby human beings do not want to let themselves and others down, but engage themselves personally and willingly in a collective action.

A school that uses ‘the school as a community metaphor’ moves from a notion of each teacher doing his or her own work to a notion of teachers sharing ideas and knowing what was going on in others’ classrooms (Sergiovanni 1992: 42). This notion of sharing ideas and assisting one another among teachers culminates in greater professionalism which no longer requires a direct leadership as these people possess internal motivation which enables them to work hard toward realizing a goal that they believe in (*Ibid.*). Sergiovanni made this point clear when he posited that:

Leadership becomes less urgent once the wheels of professionalism begin to turn by themselves. When this happens superintendents and principals can spend less time trying to figure out how to push and pull teachers toward goals and more time dealing with the issues of teaching and learning and ensuring financial, moral, political, and managerial support for the school (1992: 42).

According to Sergiovanni, communities are organized around relationships as they create social structures that unify and bind people to a set of shared values and ideas which provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of “we” from “I” (2001: 77). The notion of organisational culture stems from relationships among a group of people who share the same values and beliefs which in this case can be attested to the school as a community metaphor, hence organisational culture will be my next point of departure.

2.8 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Organisational culture and leadership are key aspects in any organisation, let alone a successful school, as they are perceived to influence each other. Although Davidoff and Lazarus (2002: 52) described organisational culture as “the way we do things around here” Deal and Peterson (1999: 2) made it explicit when they defined organisational culture as a way for school leaders to:

...better understand their school’s own unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that seem to permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or not, and how teachers feel about their work and their students.

These ‘invisible, taken-for – granted flow of beliefs and assumptions’ are consciously, sub-consciously or unconsciously guiding the behaviours and attitudes of the principal, teachers and students. Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (in Bush 2003: 162) claimed that culture is symbolized in three modes:

- Conceptually or verbally, for example through use of language and the expression of organisational aims.
- Behaviourally, through rituals, ceremonies, rules, support mechanisms, and patterns of social interaction.
- Visually or materially, through facilities, equipment, memorabilia, mottos, crests and uniforms.

There are two schools of thought about organisational culture that I as an investigator of the leadership role of a principal in a successful rural school need to be aware of: one group of scholars claim that it is the leaders role to create and maintain the organisational

culture while other group of scholars are of the opinion that it is the organisation's cultural force which drives and shape leadership (Jean Louis 2004: 20).

Schein is in the group of scholars who opined that the leader defines and shapes the organisation culture. He claimed that "culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin in that leaders first create culture when they create groups and organisation" (Schein 1992: 15). He made his point further explicit when he posited that the leader has an obligation to perceive the functional and dysfunctional elements of the existing culture with a view to manage cultural evolution and change it in a way that will enable the group to survive in a changing environment (*Ibid.*). Similarly Bush (2003: 169) asserted that leaders have the main responsibility for generating and sustaining culture in schools by communicating core values and beliefs both within the organisation and to external stakeholders.

On the contrary Sergiovanni and Corbally fervently advocated that organisational culture shapes and influences leadership as it guides the leader in the way he/she should lead the organisation. They asserted that a leader expresses the meanings and values of the organisational culture, hence "leadership acts are expressions of culture" (Sergiovanni and Corbally in Jean Louis 2004: 21).

These dichotomous thoughts are very interesting and significant for my study as I believe both ways/thoughts can work well enough to help the school to succeed. If a principal realises/detects that the organisational culture is dysfunctional and does not support organisational effectiveness, he/she can shape it and align it to the goals and objectives of the organisation which is the idea advocated by the likes of Schein (1992) and Bush (2003) in their shared thought that leadership defines and shapes organisational culture. On the other hand if the principal perceives the organisational culture to support school effectiveness, then he/she will definitely align his leadership to the organisational culture that exists in the school, this scenario will most likely apply to a new principal or a school

where teachers had a paradigm shift from the school as an organisation metaphor to the school as a community metaphor. It is my opinion that if the culture of the school is drifting in the right direction, leadership will be left with no option but to follow and be shaped by it.

2.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented an overview of issues that I regard to be key in guiding my investigation into the leadership role of the principal in a successful rural school. Before commencing with my study a thorough knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of a successful school is of cardinal importance, hence the discussion of these characteristics in this chapter. My overall comprehension of a successful school is that, it is a school that fulfills internal and external criteria, such as meeting its own vision and aims as well as that of the ministry of education, parents and the society at large. Successful schools do not only prepare learners to do well in examinations but also to be productive citizens when they graduate from schools.

The leadership role to be investigated is embedded in a rural school, therefore this chapter took a glimpse at the challenges that face leadership in these schools such as lack of resources, staffing and the fact that community problems such as the lack of basic services (water and electricity) spill over to the school (HSRC 2005: 77). Leadership, is the key concept under investigation in this study, hence a detailed explanation of its meaning was also provided in this chapter. Although the definitions of leadership are as numerous as the authors who have attempted to define it (Stogdill in Yukl 2002: 2), many authors' definitions of the concept reflect the assumption that the personal power of a leader is to influence others, and make or break the spirit of an organisation, which is an awesome task.

This chapter also shed light on the evolution of leadership theories over the years, starting with the trait theory which emanated from Aristotle's notion, that from the hour of birth some are marked for leadership and others for subjection and ending with the most contemporary theories such as servant leadership which emphasize that leadership must not only concentrate on tasks but also on the relationships between the leaders and the followers (Stone 2004: 355). The *task/person* orientation which was developed by the behavioural scientists, received a substantial discussion in this chapter as well. The discussion centered on how task-oriented leaders are different from person-oriented leaders in terms of their behaviour and it also highlighted how equilibrium of these two dimensions can be achieved.

Another leadership theory that has been presented in this chapter is the instructional leadership, although it does not form part of the evolution of the theories, it is very crucial in that it emphasizes the central activities of a school which are 'teaching and learning.' The notion of substitutes for leadership was also looked at especially emphasizing the point that if principals help teachers to develop a sense of professionalism then their direct leadership will be less required (Sergiovanni 1992: 42). I found it also important to illuminate the relationship between organisation culture and leadership in this chapter. I believe that as much as organisational culture and leadership influence each other so do they both have a bearing on the effectiveness of the school.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss the methodological approaches of my study. I shed light on the research paradigm I followed in terms of how its characteristic features directed and guided my study. The research method I used in an attempt to understand the phenomenon under investigation is also discussed broadly in this chapter. Likewise I explain in detail the data generating instruments that I used for my data collection as well as how I analyzed the data. Finally this chapter also highlights the ethical issues I observed during data collection as well as the potential limitations posed by the methodological approaches I have chosen for my study.

3.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Maxwell (2005: 36) the term paradigm, which derives from the work of Thomas Kuhn, a historian of science, refers to:

A set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we can understand it (epistemology).... Paradigms also typically include specific methodological strategies linked to these assumptions and identify particular studies that are seen as exemplifying these assumptions and methods.

Similarly Patton (2002: 69) asserted that: “A paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. As such, paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners.”

As my primary goal has been to solicit participants’ perceptions and experiences of the leadership role of the principal in a rural school in Namibia, I found the constructivist paradigm appropriate for my study. Schwandt (in Mertens 2005: 12) claimed that:

The basic assumptions guiding the constructivist paradigm are that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, and that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it.

Merriam (2002: 6) asserted that in a qualitative study the interest of the researcher lies in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon. She emphasized this claim by stipulating that in a qualitative study the researcher seeks to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved, or a combination of these” (*Ibid.*).

3.3 THE RESEARCH METHOD

The term ‘method’ in educational research refers to the approaches/techniques used to generate data needed to be used as a basis for inferences and interpretation. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 44). As I have indicated already in Chapter 1 I have chosen the case study method for my research as “case studies recognize the complexity of the case and embeddedness of social truths” (Adelman *et al.* in Basse 1999: 23). Similarly Stake (1995: xi) defined the case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.” Merriam (2002: 179) asserted that the selection of the case to be studied is not done randomly but purposefully, in that, that particular person, site, program, process,

community, or other bounded system to be studied is selected because the researcher is interested in the characteristics it exhibits. Cohen *et al.* (2000: 182) posited that:

Case studies strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and ‘thick description’ of participants’ lived experiences of , thoughts, about and feelings for, a situation.

Yin argued that case study research method can be split into exploratory, descriptive and explanatory methods in an attempt to deal with the “who,” “what,” “where,” “how,” and “why” research questions (2003: 5-6). My study is in the exploratory case study method, in that, I seek to explore or understand how a particular phenomenon manifests itself in a particular setting. My study does not seek to make generalization as it is not a purpose of a case study. However Stake argued that although case study researchers do not seek to make generalizations, readers do as:

Our readers often are more familiar with the cases than we researchers are. They can add their own parts of the story. We should allow some of this input to analysis to help form reader generalizations. The reader will take both our narrative descriptions and our assertions: narrative descriptions to form vicarious experience and naturalistic generalizations, assertions to work with existing propositional knowledge to modify existing generalizations (1995: 86).

The case which my study investigates is the leadership role of Ruacana Senior Secondary School principal.

3.4 THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

The research sample attempts to find out from whom the data was collected. Mertens referred to the sampling process as:

The method used to select a given number of people (or things) from a population.... The strategy for selecting your sample influences the quality of your data and the inferences that you can make from it.... In most research studies, it is simply not feasible to collect data from every individual in a setting or population (2005: 69).

The quality of a piece of study does not only depend on the appropriateness of the methodology and instrumentation, but also the suitability of the sampling strategy chosen (Cohen *et al.* 2002: 92). As I have indicated in Chapter 1 I used a purposive sampling for my study, in that, I purposefully selected the principal and four other people who are leaders at the school. Mertens (2005: 317) asserted that researchers typically select samples with a goal of identifying information rich cases that will allow them to study a case in-depth when working within the interpretive paradigm. Similarly Patton (2002: 230) claimed that one prominent feature differentiating qualitative from quantitative research is the logic that undergird sampling approaches. He asserted that: "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully. Quantitative methods typically depend on larger samples selected randomly" (*Ibid.*). According to Cohen *et al.* in purposive sampling the researcher chooses a sample for a specific purpose or that is satisfactory to his/her specific needs (2002: 103). As I was conducting a small scale-study, I have chosen a small sample of five people as I thought the data generated from them would be sufficient for my study and in fact it worked out perfectly as envisaged. Merriam (2001: 64) argued that the size of the sample does not matter, what matters are adequate number of participants to answer the questions posed.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

I used semi-structured interviews and observation as my primary data collecting instruments for my study while document analysis was a secondary data collecting instrument.

3.5.1 Interviews

Interviews were my main primary data generating tools. I found interviews appropriate for my study as they enabled me to explore the lived experience of my respondents.

Taylor and Bogdan explained that:

Interview is directed toward learning about events and activities that cannot be observed directly... the people being interviewed are informants in the truest sense of the word. They act as eyes and ears in the field for the researcher (1998: 89).

I chose a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions in order to give room for subsequent questions that may arise as a result of something mentioned by the interviewee during the discussion. Hence as the interviews were exploratory, probing played a vital role in soliciting more information and clarifying issues during the interview process. Before the interviews I made sure that my respondents were at ease and comfortable by making it clear to them that what we were going to engage in was not an interrogation of some kind but rather an ordinary conversation about an educational phenomenon. The main purpose of interviews is to obtain a special kind of information from respondents. Patton (2002: 340) contended that:

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

Each interview was tape-recorded and then transcribed in order to provide me with the picture that each participant has painted regarding the principal leadership role at the school and if need be to arrange a follow up interview.

3.5.2 Observation

Observation was my other primary data generating instrument used to collect data. Kumar (1996: 105) explained observation as "a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place." Kidder (in Merriam 2001: 94) asserted that observation is a research tool when it complies with the following criteria: "(1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately, (3) is recorded systematically, and (4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability." Merriam (2001: 96) added that observations are used in conjunction with interviews and document analysis to triangulate emerging findings. Even though I was not teaching I mingled with teachers and learners and had regular casual conversations with them, hence I was an observer for the two weeks that I spent at the school. Similarly I strived to the best of my ability not to show any sign to the principal that I was observing him as I thought awareness of this could cause a behavioural change in him. Merriam described the role of a participant observer as follows:

The participant observer sees things firsthand and uses his or her own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed rather than relying upon once-removed accounts from interviews. Observation makes it possible to record behavior as it is happening (2001: 96).

While my immersion in the site was not long enough to warrant a claim for participant observation, I did make field notes describing the behaviour of the principal in terms of how I perceived it to contribute to the success of the school. I also jotted down in my field notes: direct quotations of the principal as well as the reactions of teachers and learners to the principal's behaviour. These write-ups in my field notes became the raw data that constituted my observation journal and hence contributed significantly to the study's findings.

3.5.3 Document analysis

I used document analysis as a secondary data generating instrument. Secondary sources collect data from sources such as articles, journals, magazines, books and periodicals to obtain historical and other type of information (Kumar 1996: 104). Documents are available materials or data, which means anything in existence prior to the research at hand (Merriam 2001: 113). The materials I found relevant at the school depicted the vision and mission statement of the school and that of the Ministry of education, the organograms of the school, an estimate of the school budget for the year 2006 as well as school rules for the learners. Most of these materials were pasted in the principal's office and the staffroom as well as on the school's notice boards in the school yard. Merriam (2002: 13) argued that "the strength of documents as a data source lies with the fact that they already exist in the situation; they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator might."

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of transforming data into findings and it "involves reducing the amount of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (Patton 2002: 432). My data analysis was an ongoing process and started

concurrently with data collection as Coffey and Atkinson (in Maxwell 2005: 95) claimed that: “We should never collect data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously.” Therefore as soon as I have completed my field work or an interview I transcribed the data and coded it, so that if any clarification should be needed especially in the case of interview I could quickly go back to the informant and tie up the loose ends. Taylor and Bogdan (1998: 141) claimed that:

Data analysis, as we see it, entails certain distinct activities. The first and most important one is ongoing discovery – identifying themes and developing concepts and propositions. The second activity, which typically occurs after the data have been collected, entails coding the data and refining one’s understanding of the subject matter.

Transcribing the interviews and typing the handwritten field notes enabled me to immerse myself with the data. Patton contended that the transition between fieldwork and full analysis gives the researcher “a chance to get a feel for the cumulative data as a whole” (2002: 441). The analysis of data enables the researcher to recognize things which emerge from the findings (Stake 1995: 72).

During data analysis I sifted through the data and clustered them into different characteristics which described the leadership role of the principal at the school. To enrich my findings and overcome validity threats I used triangulation to synthesize the three sources of data. Triangulation refers to the collection and analysis of information using a variety of sources and methods (Fielding & Fielding in Maxwell 2005: 93).

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues ... relate to accuracy, confidentiality, breadth of consultation, rights of access and continuity of purpose (Burgess 1989: 16).

The researcher needs to get permission to have access to the institution or organisation where the research is to be conducted (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 53). Thus before going to the school I wrote letters to the principal (Appendix A), the circuit inspector for the school (Appendix B), and the Regional director of education in Omusati region (Appendix C) seeking their permission to allow me to conduct my study at Ruacana Senior Secondary School, to which they responded positively through the circuit inspector.

During the data collection process my participants signed a research protocol form/informed consent (Appendix D) and I also ensured that before an interview with each participant, I informed him of the purpose of the research and that his involvement in the study is voluntary, in that, he/she has the right to withdraw at any given time if he/she so wish. Diener and Crandall as cited in Cohen *et al.* (2000: 51) defined informed consent as “the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions.”

In order to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality of interviewees I used the titles of their positions instead of their names. However permission to use the name of the school was granted.

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Case studies are particularistic of nature, focusing solely on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon (Merriam 2001: 29); hence they do not seek to make generalizations as they lack representativeness. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 110) substantiated this claim by stating that: “The trouble with generalizations is that they don’t apply to particulars.” However, Stake (in Lincoln and Guba 1985: 120) argued that if generalization is defined on the basis of data representation of some population, the

assertion that case studies are non-useful is probably correct. But, he argued further that if the situation is considered from the perspective of the reader: “Case studies will often be the preferred method of research because they may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalization” (*Ibid.*). There are two types of generalizations, the “lawlike – that is the meaning we usually attach to the term in scientific discourse” and the “intuitive, based on personal direct and vicarious experience – that is the meaning intended by the term “naturalistic generalization” (Stake in Lincoln and Guba 1985: 120). Case studies contribute much to the latter. Readers use a case study research to determine if the situation is matching theirs especially if the researcher provides a rich and thick description of the phenomenon (Merriam 2001: 211).

The interpretive paradigm is based on the premise that each individual’s way of making sense of the world is valid and worthy of respect as any other (Patton 2002: 97). On the other hand the constructionism emphasizes the collective generation of meaning as the best way that gives the definite view of the world (*Ibid.*). The constructionist argument is based on the fact that the interpretive paradigm lacks objectivity. Kirk and Miller (in Patton 2002: 93) asserted that:

Objectivity, though the term has been taken by some to suggest a naïve and inhumane version of vulgar positivism, is the essential basis of all good research. Without it, the only reason the reader of the research might have for accepting the conclusion of the investigator would be an authoritarian respect for the person of the author. Objectivity is a simultaneous realization of as much reliability and validity as possible.

On the aspect of validity, Stake (1995: 107) asserted that: “In our search both for accuracy and alternative explanations, we need discipline, we need protocols which do not depend on mere intuition and good intention to “get it right.” In qualitative research, those protocols come under the name “triangulation.” To validate my data I used methodological triangulation (interviews, observation and document analysis) and member checking - I gave each participant the transcribed data I collected from him to

read and if need be amend, delete, extend or develop the data. Similarly I strived throughout my study to look at the data through unbiased goggles in an attempt to let the data speak for themselves and shape the phenomenon in the way it is perceived by the participants themselves.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have provided a description of the methodological approaches I followed to conduct my research such as the research paradigm, the research method, and the data generating instruments as well as how the data were analyzed. A detailed discussion of the ethical issues that I dealt with during the research process has also been provided in this chapter. Finally the methodological approaches used have been critiqued in terms of the potential limitations it could pose to the study.

In the next chapter I present the data in a raw form in order to enable the reader to understand them as they emerged from the respondents.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Since my research study sought to investigate the principal's leadership role in a successful rural school, my research goal was to explore how the principal and other people in leadership positions at the school perceive the leadership role of the principal to contribute to the success of the school.

My research site was Ruacana Senior Secondary School. This school was established in 1991, when the former military base at Ruacana was transformed into a senior secondary school shortly after independence in 1990. Ever since its establishment this school has produced good academic results especially in grade 10 and 12 which write external examinations of which the results are revealed at national level and compared across the country. Their performance over the years ranged between 70% - 100%, a feat hardly accomplished by any other rural school especially in the north-western part of Namibia where Ruacana Senior Secondary School is situated.

I posed several questions to participants in an attempt to solicit their perceptions and experiences regarding the principal's leadership role at the school and below are some of the questions that formed the core of the interviews:

- How do you perceive the principal leadership role to contribute to the survival of the school, in context where neighboring schools showed symptoms of crisis?

- Do you perceive any particular things which the principal of this school does, which principals of neighboring school do not do, to which you can ascribe the success of this school?
- Do you think the principal concentrates more on task completion by the teachers or on improving the relationship between him and teachers?
- There is a Chinese proverb that says: “not the cry, but the flight of the wild duck, leads the flock to fly and follow,” how does this proverb relate to the principal’s leadership role?
- What are the central activities that the principal focuses on at the school?
- How do you describe the principal as a leader?
- Many rural schools struggle with problems in their environment, such as poverty, unemployment and lack of basic services. What does the principal do to alleviate or lessen the impact of these features on the school?
- How would you describe the principal relationship with the school board and parents?

I present the data as they emerged from the responses of the respondents to the interview questions. Since I used the interpretive paradigm to capture the data, I have decided to let the data speak for themselves in an attempt to portray exactly how the respondents’ view the leadership role of the principal in terms of the academic success of the school.

My data were collected mainly through interviews and observation, while document analysis played an important role of confirming the data. Although I focused on the perceptions of the respondents in order to shed light on the meaning they attach to the principal’s leadership role, I ensured that my narrative voice is heard by means of field notes taken during my observation at the school as well as comments on documents I found relevant and interesting. These serve the dual purpose of being a validity measure and to confirm respondents’ data (triangulation).

I will start this chapter with a biographical sketch of the principal as I believe it could have a bearing on the role he plays at the school.

4. 2 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE PRINCIPAL

The principal is a 48 years old, married man who grew up at a village called Epinga in Ohangwena region. He attended primary school there and in the early 1970s he went to Odibo High school in the same region. In the middle of 1970s he went into exile for 17 years. While in exile he studied a diploma in education and upon completion he became a teacher in 1987. Due to his excellent performance in the diploma course he started his teaching career at managerial level as a Head of Department and when he came to Namibia he resumed his career at the same level at Ruacana Senior Secondary School in 1991. He was promoted to the position of principal in 1996 and has been the principal of this school ever since up to now. Although he was on study leave for the last four years studying for a Bachelor's degree in Information and Communication Technology at the University of Namibia, during his vacations he used to go back to the school and assist where necessary. He officially returned to the school in the second half of 2005.

The data are reported in terms of four themes which I have identified in studying the transcripts. These themes are:

- Balanced leadership
- Democratic procedures
- Strategic leadership
- Consciousness of the leadership role

Data are presented using as many of the respondents' original words as seems appropriate in accordance with these themes. The journal entries made during observation are referred to and quoted where appropriate to confirm and substantiate interview data.

Although permission was granted to use the name of the school, the names of the respondents will be identified by the titles of their positions at the school in order to comply with my undertaking of guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality of interviewees. They will be identified as follows:

1. The Principal
2. The Inspector
3. The Head of Department (HOD)
4. The LRC president
5. The School Board (SB) chairperson

What emerges from the data is that the principal plays a key role in the success of the school. Respondents highlighted qualities and characteristics of the principal which they believed contributed to the effectiveness of his leadership. Here I present these in terms of identified themes.

4. 3 BALANCED LEADERSHIP

The data suggest that the principal is a balanced leader. He is perceived to focus on both the task completion and relationships with subordinates. This trait of the principal is attested to by the fact that while he emphasizes control, monitoring, clear rules and regulations, clear expectations and compliance he also has a strong interest in people as demonstrated by his emphasis on teamwork.

Since the principal is perceived to exhibit characteristics that stress both the task and person orientations, I will discuss first those characteristics from the data that stress his emphasis on task.

4.3.1 The principal monitors and controls

The principal's emphasis on task is suggested by his own remark when he said: "I am not office-bound, I move around the school premises in order to monitor what is going on in the school and classrooms in particular." The Inspector echoed this remark when he said "Whenever I visit the school during school hours I usually find the principal teaching or roaming from class to class monitoring what is going on in the classes."

It also surfaced from the data that the principal ensures that teachers are equal to their task at all times. Recordings in my journal testify to this:

I was sitting with a female teacher in the staffroom on this particular day when a learner came in and told the teacher that the principal had sent him to come and call her as she was having a religious and moral education period with them. When I asked the teacher how the principal noticed that her class was unattended, she said: "The principal is seldom in his office, he wanders around the school and when he notices that there is no teacher in a certain class, he will enquire from the class-captain as to which teacher is supposed to be teaching them and he will send the class-captain to go and call that teacher." She further asserted that the principal never fails to find a way to remind someone of his/her task whenever a person slips up (Journal entry 4 July 2006).

In addition to reminding teachers of their tasks the HOD said the principal delegates tasks to teachers, and whenever he does, he makes sure that he keeps in touch with that particular teacher to whom a task has been delegated in order to ensure that he renders support and assistance if need be.

4.3.2 The principal is a dedicated leader

The school is his 'whole life' - HOD

The principal is perceived to be a very dedicated person to his work as the HOD put it that:

The principal attends almost every activity of the school, right from the morning up to the evening activities. A fair description of his leadership role is that he lives for the school, when you look at what he does at the school, you will think that the school is his whole life as he concentrates on nothing else but the school.

Similarly the Inspector said the principal works tirelessly and he is school-bound most of the time, "Whenever I want to see him I know I will find him at the school whether it's in the morning, afternoon or evening."

4.3.3 The principal is time-conscious

The data suggest that the principal respects time and hence emphasizes time on task. The HOD said the principal arrives at school well before the starting time of any scheduled activity. The following observations in my journal correspond with the HOD's statement:

I have observed the principal sticking to time on task on several occasions. Whenever he had a teaching period he would rush to the class after the ringing of the bell. His respect for time is also confirmed by pictures and writings about time. One such picture is pasted on his office door (Figure 1 overleaf). It is a picture of a person rushing and the following phrase is written underneath: "Rushing for time on task." I have also noticed the phrase "Please do stick to time on task" on the master time-table as well as teachers' personal time-tables (Journal entry 4 July 2006).

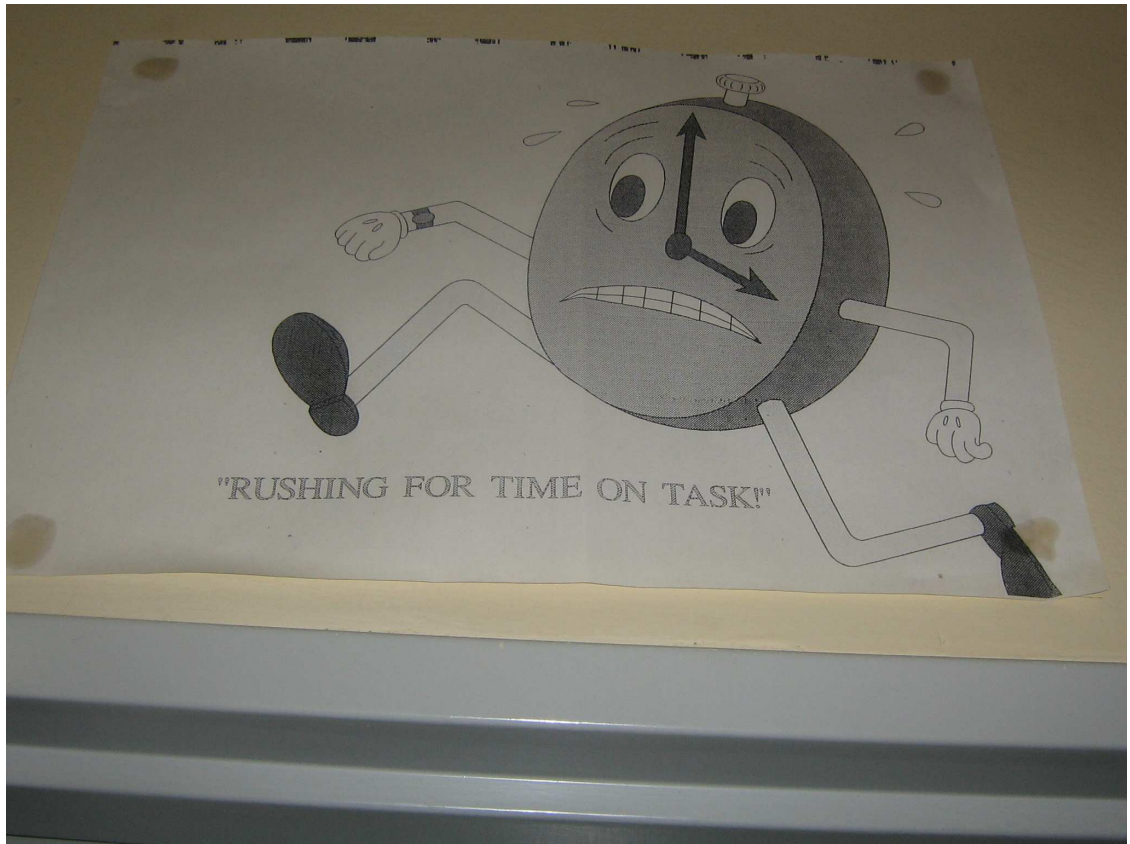


Figure 1

Another example of the principal's time consciousness appears in my journal entry of Friday July 7, 2006:

At the morning assembly on Friday, the teacher who was responsible for making announcements that day ignored the ringing of the bell for the first period and wanted to continue with the announcements and the principal intervened and told him that the time for announcements was over and he must rather look for another "platform" to make the remaining announcements; the learners were released to go to their classes and start with the first period (Journal entry 7 July 2006).

4.3.4 The principal focuses on teaching and learning

Despite being the principal, hence the supervisor of teachers, the principal rolls up his sleeves and gets his hands dirty like any other teacher as he teaches and appears to genuinely enjoy it. I captured this characteristic in one of my journal entries:

On my very first day at the school, I went as early as 07h00 hoping to find the principal in his office, just to be told upon enquiry from the secretary that he was at the class teaching and would only be back in 40 minutes time. Even after seeing him I noticed him going to the class to teach from time to time (Journal entry 3 July 2006).

The principal believes that quality teaching and learning are key ingredients in a successful school, He asserted that: “Our focal point at the school is excellent academic performance through quality teaching and learning as well as the creation of an atmosphere that is conducive for learners’ learning.” When asked how he ensures that the teaching and learning that takes place is effective/of quality, he explained his answer as follows:

We ensure that the learning competencies that teachers impart to the learners match those stipulated in the syllabus through subject group discussions and class visits. We also see to it that the assessment instruments such as tests and examinations that teachers use are up to standard. Teachers must have a scheme of work and come prepared to teach their lessons every day. On the aspect of learning, we have availed 16 hours supervised study time to the learners per week. They attend afternoon and evening studies from Monday to Sunday with the exception of the whole of Saturday when they watch television or play games and Wednesday and Sunday afternoons when they go shopping and do sports respectively.

The HOD echoed the same sentiment, saying

The principal focuses basically on four things at the school: teaching, learning, discipline and time on task. Teachers and learners are fully aware of these focal points; hence they strive to operate within the parameters of these focal points.

I was also struck by a poster depicting these aspects of his leadership, as recorded in my journal:

A poster depicting the four enemies of learning (Figure 2) is pasted at the entrance of the staffroom (Journal entry 4 July 2006).

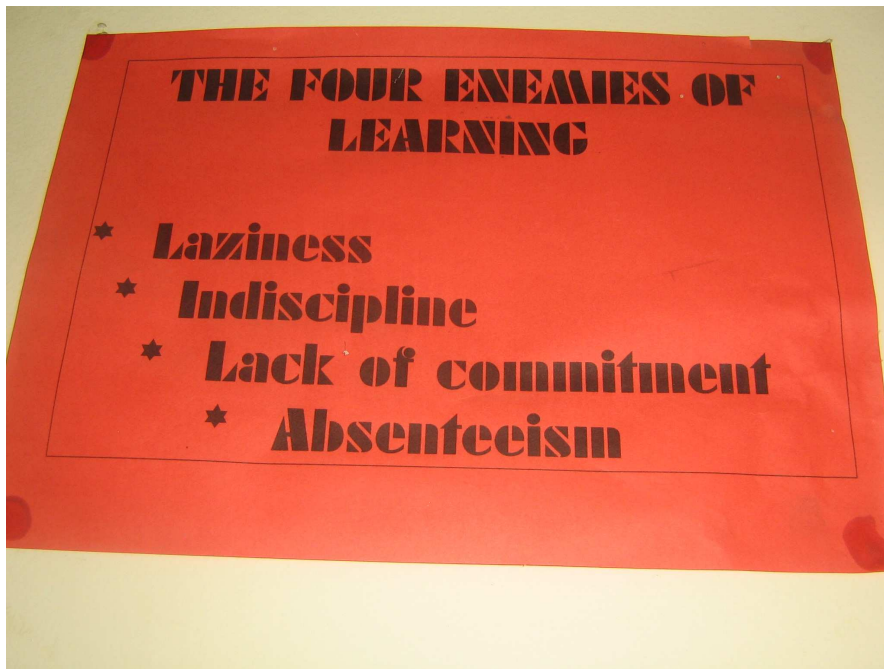


Figure 2

4.3.5 The principal adheres to rules and regulations

The data portray the principal as a disciplined man who abides by the rules. The school holds staff briefings every Thursday afternoon, and on July 6, 2006, I was fortunate to

attend one of these. During this staff briefing one of the things the principal stressed was that teachers must respect time by being punctual at all times. This reminder sparked the following action from the principal the next morning which demonstrated that he does not compromise on rules:

On Friday July 7, 2006, I went early to school to be at the morning assembly. When it was nearly time for the morning assembly I saw the principal instructing the security guard to lock the two gates of the school and not to open them until he returned from the assembly. After assembly I saw a teacher's car and learners at the gate waiting for the principal to come and open for them. The learners were taken to the office to sign a record of late-coming and although the teacher was not called in to the office the fact that she was locked out and had to wait for the principal to come and open for her was an embarrassment. I overheard her saying as she was entering the staffroom: "How could I be locked out if I arrived exactly on time" and this showed me the embarrassment she felt deep inside (Journal entry 7 July 2006).

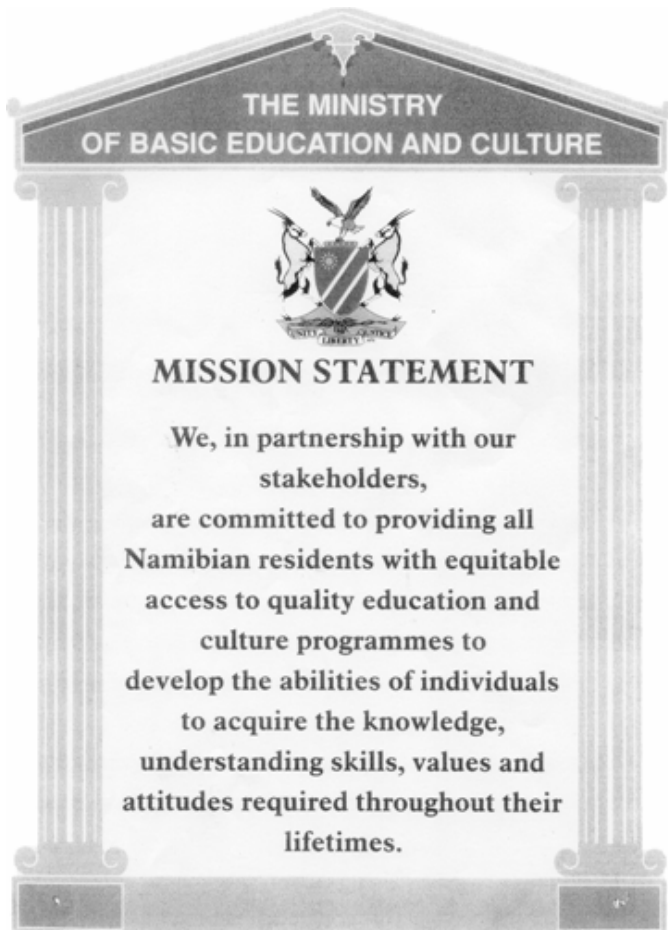
Respondents also asserted that the principal does not only abide by the decisions taken at the school but also ministerial circulars and the Education Act (Act no. 16 of 2001). On the discussion of how the principal deals with learners' disciplinary problems, The HOD said:

The principal is a kind of person who does things by the book, so when it comes to learners' disciplinary problems he is always guided by the Education Act (Act no. 16 of 2001) since all the measures to be taken for learners' transgressions are outlined in the Act.

Although the LRC president stated that each learner has received a copy of the section in the Education Act (Act no. 16 of 2001) which deals with learners' discipline, notes in my journal show that:

The section/part of the Act (Act no. 16 of 2001) in question is also put on the notice boards at the school and hostel. Likewise a copy of the Education Act (Act no. 16 of 2001) is kept in the staffroom for teachers to

read and acquaint themselves with its contents (Journal entry 10 July 2006).



The principal is in much the same way projected to act as an ‘agent’ of the national drive towards improving education, as he is aware of his position within the broader context and hence reminds the rest of the school of the ‘bigger picture.’ A testimony to this position of the principal is the hanging of the mission statement of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (Figure 3) in his office and staffroom:

Figure 3

4.3.6 The principal is autocratic

The principal is perceived to be a strong and autocratic leader. The SB Chairperson said he sees in the principal a bold person who can stand his ground. “He is a difficult person to deal with especially in meetings.” He further posited that the principal puts forward his ideas in a strong and forceful way and is hardly dissuaded from an idea that he believes is a good one. My journal entry illustrates this characteristic of the principal:

During the staff briefing I observed that the discussions were flowing only in one direction with less spontaneous participation from the staff, unless a staff member was reporting on a task/responsibility allocated to him or her or answering a direct question posed to him or her. There appeared as if everything the principal says is accepted to be correct and workable, I hardly heard a contra opinion to the principal's (Journal entry 6 July 2006).

The data portray the principal to be a no-nonsense leader as he would not even spare a teacher an embarrassment in front of the learners. Notes in my journal show how the principal embarrassed the sport organizer in front of the learners:

Like at the morning assembly when he interrupted the teacher's announcements when it was time for the commencement of the first period. On another occasion the principal stopped boys who were escorted by a teacher (sport organizer) to a soccer exercise during the afternoon study and when the teacher protested against this act, he said the teacher must go and consult the minutes of the last staff meeting (Journal entry 11 July 2006).

When I consulted the minutes I learned that it was decided in that meeting that if there were no tournaments in the near future, learners were not supposed to miss the afternoon study because of exercises.

The LRC president substantiated the principal's dictatorship when he said: "although the principal loves learners, they fear him as he is very strict and does not tolerate indiscipline." I have noted in my journal that learners are aware of the principal strictness and hence do not want to be found on the wrong side of the school rules:

When the principal comes out of the office and moves towards the classes, learners who were standing in front of their classes run into the classes and when he moves in front of the classes the noise subsides dramatically (Journal entry 3 July 2006).

This observation clearly delineates that the principal is feared by the learners.

The preceding section shed light on those characteristics of the principals that stress his emphasis on task as suggested by the data. The next section looks at the principal's characteristics which stress his emphasis on consideration for other people.

4.3.7 The principal is a team player

While the principal is so task-oriented as depicted by the previous section, he is similarly a team member who does not isolate himself but maintains good relationships with teachers, learners and parents: The HOD asserted that the principal keeps in touch with the members of staff; he never fails to greet a teacher cordially or even enquire about a teacher's well-being. He further said in his own words: "The principal is always willing to offer advice or take advice from a colleague and gives credit where it is due."

The principal believes that success in organisations springs from team work rather than from individual effort, he said: "I believe that effective leadership derives from a team effort instead of an individual effort hence I emphasize teamwork, commitment and hard work in my leadership." The principal rarely uses the word "I" or "you"; he would most often use the word "we." A note in my journal entry shows that:

He would often say: "We must respect time or we must go to classes during our periods" (Journal entry 13 July 2006).

To the question of who the team he is referring to comprises, the principal explained that the team comprises many people at different levels such as Heads of Department, the

management team, subject heads, teachers and the Learners' Representative Council. He also asserted that parents play a crucial role in the team through their participation in the school board as well as the Parent Teacher Association.

An entry in my journal attests to this team effort:

During my observation of the evening studies I learned that although there were teachers on study duty, the classes were under the supervision of LRC members. LRC members are demarcated into the different class groups to maintain order during the afternoon and evening studies and they do this task diligently (Journal entry 11 July 2006).

The LRC president postulated that the principal is a people's person who likes to be with learners most of the time. "During sport activities and fund-raising activities the principal is usually among the learners like he is one of them and the learners feel comfortable with him in their midst." He further claimed that despite the fact that there are more than 500 learners at the school he knows them all by their names. A recording in my journal confirms this claim:

I noticed the principal on several occasions calling a learner by name and asking him/her where he/she was going or in whose class he/she was (Journal entry 12 July 2006).

Reflecting on the relationship between himself as a School Board chairperson and the principal, The SB Chairperson shared that he and the entire board have a very good relationship with the principal. He also referred to the relationship between the principal and the parents as excellent. He further added that: "the principal invites parents to the school to come and have a chat with him or teachers regarding their children's progress at school or any other school related matter."

4.3.8 The principal is humane and compassionate

The data suggest that the biblical verse that says “Do to others as you would have them do to you” seems to have a special meaning for the principal as he does to teachers what he would have them do to learners. Recordings in my journal reveal this humane and compassionate trait of the principal:

During the staff briefing meeting on Thursday, July 6, 2006, the principal gave a stern order for the switching off of cell phones. However, one teacher did not switch off hers and it rang in the middle of a discussion and the principal just stared at her and continued with the meeting (Journal entry 6 July 2006).

Another example from the same journal recordings depicts the principal’s caring attitude toward learners:

During the same staff briefing meeting the principal said: “Colleagues we must carry a stick and a carrot when we go to the learners” which he further explained that teachers must show care and concern for the learners even if they have misbehaved (Journal entry 6 July 2006).

The LRC president substantiated the principal’s care and concern for the learners when he said: “The principal visits us frequently in the hostel and dining hall to acquaint himself with the conditions we live under and the kind of food we eat.”

The principal on his part shared that although he has a formal meeting with the learners once every month in which matters pertaining to the school and learners’ welfare are discussed, he also makes sure that he talks to them informally when they meet in corridors or when they are together during extra-mural activities.

Similarly the HOD shared that the principal also has care and concern for parents: “He knows their socio-economic status; therefore he always negotiates with those who struggle to pay the school development fund or buy school uniforms for their children, to fulfill these obligations at their convenience.”

4.3.9 The principal values and believes in respect for human dignity

The principal said he values and hence believes in respect for human dignity, he illustrated this point when he said: “I inculcate in the teachers and learners tolerance for cultural, tribal, political and other diversities of teachers and learners at the school.”

The LRC president shared the principal’s sentiment when he postulated that: “Our principal embraces multi-cultural diversity; he is not biased, and hence treats all the learners in the same manner.”

This sound moral attitude of the principal with learners shared by the LRC president seems to be true for the teachers also as the principal does not show any signs of nepotism or favoritism among the teachers. A recording in my journal shows this trait of the principal:

Throughout the two weeks that I spent at the school my observation shows that even though the principal’s wife teaches at the same school and there are teachers who occupy distinct positions such as the HOD and hostel superintendent, the principal has never showed any special bond/relationship between himself and these members of staff or any other teacher for that matter except the collegial relationship that he has with every member of staff (Journal entry 14 July 2006).

It surfaced from the data also that the principal's respect for others is reciprocated at the school as the HOD posited that the principal is perceived to be a role model at the school and all the teachers and learners adore and respect him.

4.4 DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES

Despite being perceived as autocratic in some ways, the principal follows democratic procedures in the school in that he involves the other stakeholders in education in the decision making process. The LRC president singled out the learners' representation in all the leadership structures of the school as a testimony that the principal abides by democratic procedures.

The data suggest that the principal holds regular meetings with teachers, the LRC, learners, the School Board and parents in order to solicit their views on important matters at the school. The SB Chairperson substantiated this claim when he asserted that the principal works very closely with the school board; he summons school board meetings several times in a single term: "He is a leader who likes to consult before taking a decision and he does not only consult the School Board, but also the teachers, learners and parents in matters that will have an effect on them." It surfaced that in this process the principal ensures that all stakeholders in education have an input in the decision making process and hence own the decisions taken at the school.

4.5 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Respondents claimed that the principal plans ahead. The principal shared that they have set Vision 2020 for the school which states that by the year 2020 the school must be one of the leading institutions of academic excellence in the country to enable it to

significantly contribute to the attainment of the national vision 2030. It emerged from the data also that in addition to the Vision the school has developed a Mission statement which outlines the values guiding their approach toward achieving the school's vision. My journal shows that:

A poster containing the school's Vision and Mission statement (Figure 4) hangs in the offices of the principal, heads of department as well as in the staffroom.

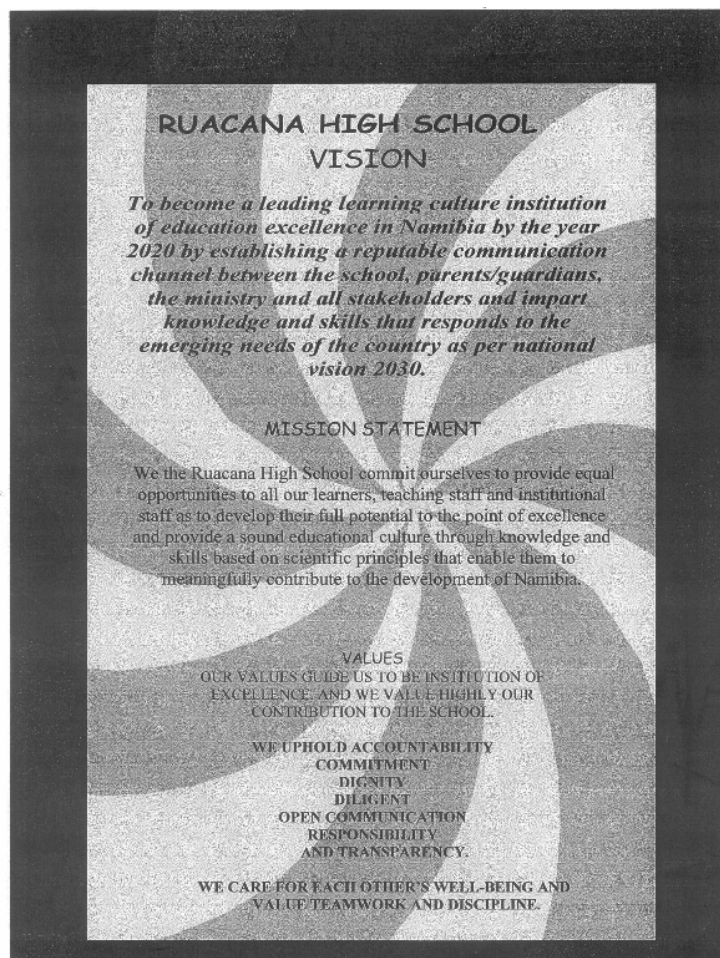


Figure 4

The data further suggests that the principal is a highly organized leader and a strong manager. He has ensured that there are appropriate structures and procedures set in place to facilitate achievement of the goals of the school:

This aspect of the principal is depicted by the organograms of the Top Management Team and staff (Figure 5.1 & 5.2). These structures show clearly the responsibility and accountability of every staff member (Journal entry 10 July 2006).

Figures 5.1 (below) and 5.2 (overleaf) are organograms depicting the structural organisation of the school:

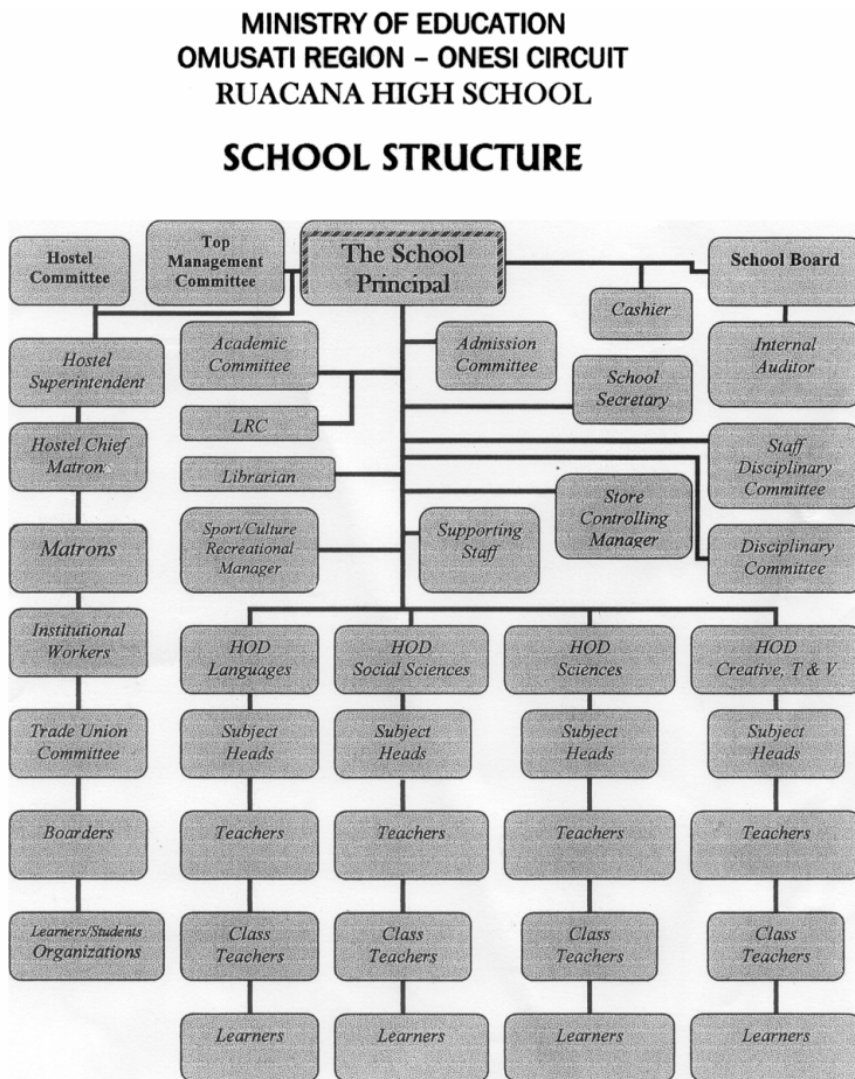
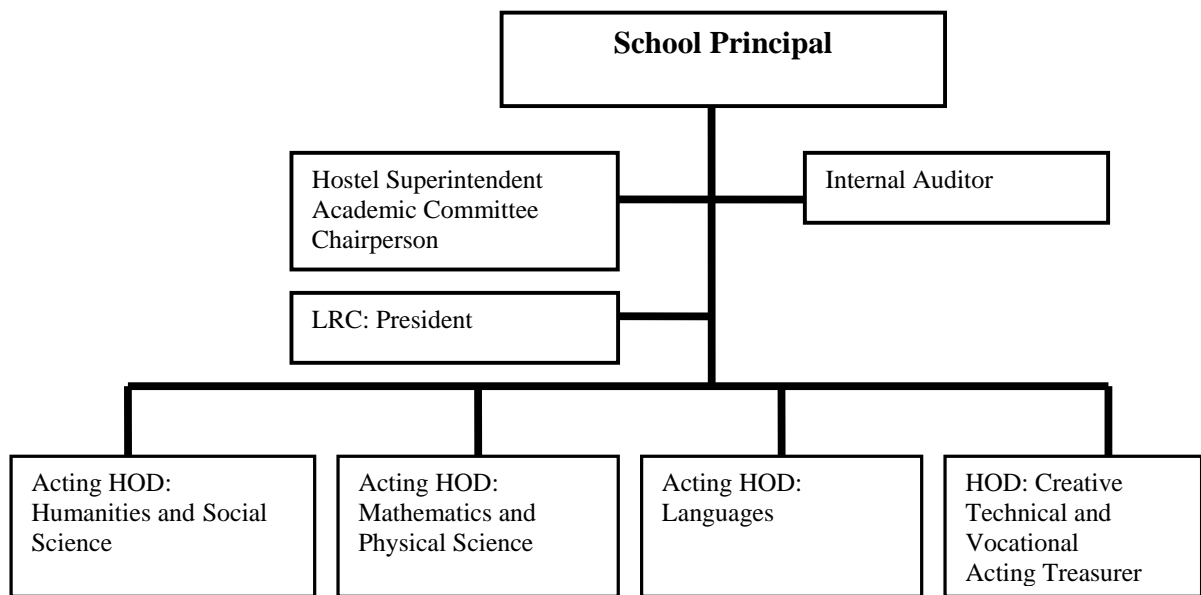


Figure 5.1

Figure 5.2

TOP MANAGEMENT TEAM



When asked why so many acting HODs appeared on the organograms the principal said the school qualifies only for two Heads of department, therefore:

I ensure that teachers in the other two departments each get a chance to act as an HOD on yearly rotational basis which help them to gain managerial experience while at the same time stabilize the organisation of the school.

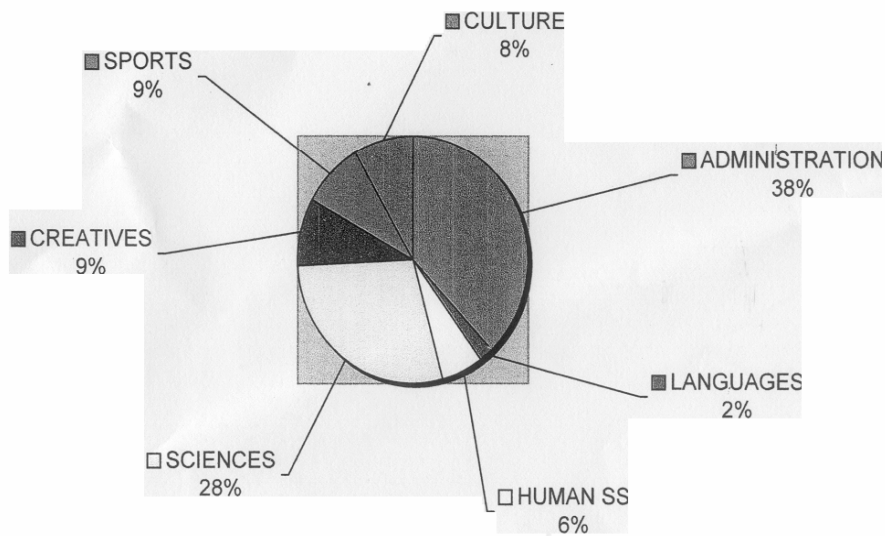
The HOD substantiated the availability of structures and procedures at the school when he said: “The principal does not do everything alone; he has structures and procedures in place that he uses to execute the programmes of the school.”

Likewise the principal seems to have a sound financial management at the school, judging by the way the budget of the school is projected on a pie-chart. A journal entry shows:

A poster displaying the budget (Figure 6) put in the principal office and staffroom. The way the budget is projected on the pie-chart appears to be very comprehensible even to the parents as it illustrates how big or small the portion allocated to each division in different colours (Journal entry 10 July 2006).

Figure 6

The School Board has approved this budget jointly with the Top Management Team on its extra-ordinary meeting held on the 4th June 2006. The breakdown of this budget is based on the total revenue: SDF N\$ 171600 from 572 learners, selling at PTA meeting N\$ 1800, Tuck shop N\$ 4000, donations [NAMPOWER] N\$ 50000, **Grand total 227400.**



4. 6 CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE LEADERSHIP ROLE

The data portrays the principal to be conscious of his leadership role in the school. This is characterized by his visibility in the school and his exemplary leadership.

4. 6.1 The principal is visible in the school

The principal's consciousness of his leadership role leads him to wander around the school premises so that his leadership role can be felt and seen by the teachers and learners. He said:

My visibility in the school is not only geared toward monitoring what is going on in the school and classrooms but also to show the teachers that I care about what they do and in the process inspire them to work hard.

My journal notes show that the principal's wandering around has a purpose:

During the staff briefing on Thursday afternoon, I learned that the principal's wandering around and observations of happening in the school are done with a purpose: he mentioned things of great concern he had observed during the course of the week on which he wanted an improvement such as late-coming to school, studies and periods by both teachers and learners. The principal also demonstrated during that meeting that his wandering around was not only restricted to the school premises and during school hours but that it stretches over to the hostel and to after-hours as well, when he mentioned that he noticed that the fence of the school had been cut at several points and that the boys hostel blocks had remained unlocked during the evening study for several days during the week (Journal entry 6 July 2006).

4.6.2 The principal leads by example

The Inspector perceives the principal to be a strong leader, in that, “he knows the way, shows the way and goes the way.” He said by knowing the way, showing the way and going the way, “I mean that the principal is conscious of his leadership role, he shows that he is the leader at the school, not by boasting about his leadership but by doing what is expected of a leader.”

To the question of how he relates his leadership role to the Chinese proverb that says: “not the cry, but the flight of the wild duck, leads the flock to fly and follow” the principal said: As a leader I cannot expect the teachers and learners to go the extra mile if I don’t go it myself. Teachers, learners and even the community members get their inspiration from the principal; when they see that the principal is committed or respects time then they will do likewise. Therefore I always strive to lead from the front by being committed to teaching and being punctual at all school activities.

The HOD echoed the principal’s sentiments when he said the principal is a strong and unwavering leader in the leading position that he occupies: “The teachers at the school try hard to emulate what he does but it is always difficult to match him. A teacher may be as time-conscious as the principal but not as committed to teaching as he is or vice-versa.”

To the question of how the school managed to keep the momentum going during the absence of the principal’s exemplary leadership for a period of four years, the SB Chairperson put it that the principal had fostered in the teachers and learners a deep rooted culture of academic excellence characterized by time on task and commitment to teaching and learning. This culture helped the school to maintain its status quo during the principal’s absence. Recordings in my journal confirm this culture:

During my two weeks stay at the school I have learned that the teachers at this school have a culture of time on task which supports and steers the school to thrive. The school starts at 07h00 and ends at 13h00. At 14h00 teachers come back to do their preparations and marking in the staffroom, those who are on study duty go from there to supervise the afternoon study from 15h00 – 16h00. I have observed that teachers and learners arrive well before the time for all these activities. It was amazing. I was staying at a house near the school and around 06h00 in the morning when I started to prepare to go to school, I could see teachers' cars already passing by to the school. And these teachers do not show any signs of pressure when they are at the school, whether in the morning, afternoon or evening they are always relaxed and happy as they go through their daily routine (Journal entry 13 July 2006).

Besides the time on task culture, a note in my journal entry also suggests that teachers have a culture of teaching:

The several times that I went to observe the evening study I found that many teachers do return in the evening to come and assist learners with homework or preparations for tests that lie ahead while some come to do remedial classes with the learners. Teachers at this school devote their time to teaching and being with learners. I was surprised to learn of a teacher who had left the school for a promotional post at a neighboring school who used to come back in the evening to assist grade 12 learners with the subjects he was teaching at the school despite the fact that learners have another teacher. When asked why he was going that extra mile, he said he felt indebted to the learners for leaving them in the middle of the year, therefore he and the new inexperienced teacher struck a deal that while she was going to teach them in the morning he would come and assist them in the evening. It's a wonderful experience that even a teacher who has left the school wants to leave behind a legacy of a thriving school (Journal entry 13 July 2006).

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the respondents' perceptions and experiences of the principal's leadership role in an academically successful rural school in Namibia. Although the data were primarily collected through interviews, a combination of information obtained from posters and entries from my research journal which I kept during the two weeks I spent at Ruacana Senior Secondary School also formed part of the data presented in this chapter.

The different characteristics of the principal that have emerged from the data were interwoven into four themes in this chapter, namely:

- Balanced leadership
- Democratic procedures
- Strategic leadership
- Consciousness of the leadership role

The picture of the principal that emerges from the data is complex and even contradictory in some places. While respondents in varying degrees have painted the picture of the principal to be a people's person who has respect for human dignity and follows democratic procedures as he holds regular meetings and consults other stakeholders in education, another paradoxical picture emerged from the data as well. The second picture is one of an autocratic leader who is feared and is hardly dissuaded from ideas. He is also perceived to embarrass teachers in front of learners at times. This paradox in leadership is inevitable and it is this that makes leadership a complex phenomenon. Hopefully this complexity will emerge more clearly in the next chapter.

In the following chapter I discuss my findings in light of the literature that is relevant and appropriate to address the goal of my study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter four I analyzed the data about the leadership role of the principal in a successful rural school that I gathered at Ruacana Senior Secondary School. These data were collected through interviews, observation and document analysis. Since I used the interpretive paradigm to capture the data, I presented the data as they emerged from respondents, field notes and some documents I consulted in order to ensure that they speak for themselves and portray the real picture of the phenomenon that was investigated.

In this chapter I discuss the data in light of my research goals and questions as well as relevant literature in order to provide a comprehensive idea of respondents' perceptions and experiences of the leadership role of the principal in a successful rural school. The use of observation and document analysis as additional data gathering tools to the interviews was intended to assist in confirming and enriching the data that emerged from the respondents as Becker in Maxwell claims that:

Both long-term participant observation and intensive interviews enable you to collect "rich" data, data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on (2005: 111).

During the analysis of my data I identified themes suggested in my literature chapter, and these themes form the framework for this chapter. The themes are:

- Balanced leadership
- Transformational leadership
- Instructional leadership
- Democratic procedures versus autocratic leadership
- Community metaphor
- Servant leadership
- Strategic leadership
- Leading by example and
- Creating organisational culture

5.2 BALANCED LEADERSHIP

Leadership research has over the years been characterized by a tension between task-orientation and consideration for subordinates. It is still a common perception in leadership that there are two types of leaders: those who emphasize task completion and those who emphasize relationships with subordinates. However this potential dilemma does not seem to have any meaning at Ruacana Senior Secondary School as the principal is perceived to be a balanced leader. It seems that the ‘people’ dimension is as important as the ‘production’ dimension to the principal hence he keeps the two dimensions in equilibrium. As explained in Chapter 2 (page 18) Blake and Mouton (1964: 110) asserted that the realistic guiding assumption regarding the balancing of the two orientations (5. 5), is that the leader does “not seek the best position for either production or people (that would be too ‘ideal’), but finds the position that is in between both...” On the Managerial Grid this principal would score 5. 5 according to the evidence provided.

Similarly Bass & Stogdill (1990: 109) argued that although being task-oriented yields success for the leader and effectiveness for the group, it is not enough: “Many bright, able, and technically proficient individuals fail as leaders because they lack interpersonal competence.” The comment of these scholars gives me confidence to claim that the reason why the leadership role of the principal is seen to contribute profoundly to the success of the school is that he manages to display both dimensions in his leadership. While he emphasizes control, monitoring, clear rules and regulations, clear expectations and compliance he also has a strong interest in people (see Chapter 4: 43). A general conclusion from Blake and Mouton (1964: 110-136) argument is that a balanced leader is not someone who simultaneously displays the two dimensions, or someone who alternates between them, but rather someone who selects specific forms of behaviour that *simultaneously reflect* a concern for both task and people.

Although it was noted during data analysis in the previous chapter that there is an overlap in the characteristics of the principal (see Chapter 4: 64), that does not suggest anything sinister about his leadership: on the contrary, it shows that the leadership of the principal is balanced. Bass & Stogdill (1990: 420) contended that overlap in characteristics is a normal phenomenon which helps to balance the leader. They explained that:

In practice one is likely to find much variation and overlap. For instance, a benevolent autocrat, although he or she is likely to be dictatorial, may also be considerably concerned about the needs of his or her subordinates. The democratic manager may encourage group decision making but may also place a lot of emphasis on getting the job done, as well as on the needs of the group (*Ibid.*).

Another characteristic of the principal’s leadership may be described as transformational.

5.3 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School has been described in the previous section as a balanced leader who focuses on both task and person orientations. The approach suggested by Blake and Mouton in the previous section that balanced leaders select behaviours which depict moderate concern for both people and production suggest an involvement of an exchange process between the leader and followers. However, Bass & Stogdill (1990:319) in (Chapter 2: 19) argued that it is not only transactional leadership that has an aspect of exchange: transformational leadership too has an aspect of exchange, though in this case it can be described as a ‘social’ exchange as it does not contain material rewards as in the case of transactional leadership. According to Bass & Stogdill:

.... the leader gives things of value to followers such as a sense of direction, values, and recognition, and receives other things in return such as esteem and responsiveness (*Ibid.*).

This social exchange suggests that although transformational leadership is known to focus on task it has a dimension of consideration too. I am of the opinion that the exchange process that occurs in the balanced leadership approach of the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School is a social exchange as the principal is perceived to be a person of high philosophical values that he inculcates in his followers. He said: “I inculcate in the teachers and learners tolerance for cultural, tribal, political and other diversities of teachers and learners at the school” (see Chapter 4: 55). This denotes the principal’s moral philosophy characterized by his respect for human dignity and lack of nepotism and favoritism. Cunningham and Cordeiro explained diversity more explicitly:

Diversity is the norm in all schools. It includes differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, socio-economic status, religion, physical and mental ability, language, and ethnicity.... All schools must

acknowledge and act on the diversity found in their populations, the community itself, the state, the nation and on our planet (2000: 90).

The principal's nurturing of tolerance is an example of 'acting on' diversity, and testimony of his moral engagement. As a result of his moral philosophy, the principal generates awareness and acceptance of the diversities of group members to subordinates and in the process stirs them to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. According to Bass in Stone, Russell & Patterson (2004: 350) this transcending beyond self-interest for the sake of the group, organisation or society characterizes transformational leadership.

Similarly the principal shows that he is not only conscious and concerned about what is happening at the school but he is also conscious of his position in the broader context of education: he reminds the rest of the school of the bigger picture. This act of the principal is demonstrated by displaying the ministerial mission statement in his office and the staffroom (see Chapter 4: 50). The pasting of this document serves a dual purpose of reminding and motivating teachers to adopt the same attitude and mentality as the principal. This behaviour of the principal resonates with the notion of transformational leadership. Hautala contended that:

Transformational leadership raises both leaders' and followers' levels of motivation and morale. When transformational leadership causes more active behaviour of every participant due to inner motivation, the transactional leaders try to motivate subordinates by rewarding or punishing them (2006: 778).

Hautala further posited that the relationship between the leader and subordinates include:

- Charisma (idealized influence)
- Inspirational leadership
- Individualized consideration and
- Intellectual stimulation (*Ibid.*).

Individualized consideration is evident in the Ruacana Senior Secondary School principal's behaviour of delegating tasks. It emerged from the data analysis that the principal delegates tasks to subordinates and whenever he does this, he keeps in touch with the teacher so that he can offer assistance if need be (see Chapter 4: 44). According to Behling and McFillen in Stone *et al.* a leader with individualized consideration "develops followers by delegating tasks and then unobtrusively monitoring those tasks – checking to see if additional support or direction is needed" (2004: 351). This act of delegating responsibilities to subordinates implies that the principal trusts subordinates and at the same time he wants to develop and empower them. Durkheim (in Kydd, Anderson & Newton 2003: 171) asserted that "trust between individuals and groups provide the basis for social order, it is the mortar of solidarity and integration."

The principal as a transformational leader moves his followers to look beyond their own interests for the good of the school and this pre-eminent move is particularly geared toward motivating and inspiring teachers and learners to harness teaching and learning. Therefore the next section will discuss instructional leadership which considers teaching and learning to be school's central activities.

5.4 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

We must be the change we wish to see in the world – Mahatma Ghandi

The principal is seldom in his office; he moves around the school in order to monitor what is going on in the school and classrooms in particular. This aspect of the principal is a classical example of instructional leadership behaviour. According to Blase & Blase (1998:106) instructional leaders are concerned about students and what teachers do, hence they walk around the school to observe how teaching and learning are taking place

and when there is something positive happening, they acknowledge it openly with a praise (see Chapter 2: 22). They further argued that one of the distinct purposes of the principal's wandering around is to be accessible in order to provide support where necessary (Blase & Blase, 1998: 108 - 109).

The principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School asserted that his focal points at the school are quality teaching and learning as well as creating a conducive learning atmosphere for the learners (see Chapter 4: 47). These focal points resonate with many studies of successful schools which claim teaching and learning to be the "core business" of the school. On the aspect of creating an atmosphere that is conducive for learning, Halawah posited that:

Establishing a safe and secure learning environment and positive, nurturing school are merely the first steps in a long series of critically high expectations effective principals set for themselves, as well as the educational communities they lead (2005: 334).

Thus, the principal does not only 'preach' about teaching but he practises it too: it emerged from data analysis that the principal rolls up his sleeves and 'gets his hands dirty' in order to model the way for teachers (see Chapter 4: 47). This resonates with Christie's (2001: 49) findings that some of the principals she interviewed in her study of resilient schools in South Africa shared that they enjoyed being in the classroom because it afforded them the opportunity to be exposed to the students and their needs as well as to acquaint themselves with the problems teachers face in the classrooms. Although Christie's statement may also be true for the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School, what surfaced from the data analysis is that the principal is teaching because he enjoys it and derives much fun from being with learners. This act of the principal was born out by the inspector when he said: "The principal knows the way, shows the way and goes the way (see Chapter 4: 62)." The leader cannot sit in a glass castle and simply direct subordinates through others, he/she needs to walk side-by-side with his/her team daily and experience the trials subordinates go through [my own emphasis]. Hamilton in

Kouzes and Posner (2002: 23) contended that: “You can’t follow someone who isn’t credible, who doesn’t truly believe in what he is doing-and how he is doing it.” Likewise Kauaria (2002: 64) claimed that followers find a leader to be credible, when what he/she says is congruent with what he/she does.

Another important aspect that emerged from the data analysis is that the principal reminds teachers of their tasks if they slip up (see Chapter 4: 44). This aspect clearly illustrates the principal’s seriousness about teaching and learning at the school. Cobb (2005: 472) postulated that traditionally principals as leaders of schools were working on a wide range of tasks in their offices while teachers were working in their classes. However there has been a call recently for principals to serve as instructional leaders in their schools, taking some of the time that was spent on managerial tasks to become more involved in the instructional programme (*Ibid.*). This means that while principals are carrying out their managerial tasks they must simultaneously provide knowledge and guidance in all areas of the curriculum.

Similarly Halawah (2005: 334) postulated that “although school’s success is influenced by many people, school principals remain one of the most important factors in this success.” He further posited that principals’ effect on learners’ learning cannot be overemphasized as the love for learning and learners are at the heart of every successful principal.

While the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School has his eyes set on the academic excellence of the school, there appear to be contradictory and even paradoxical elements in his leadership as the next section reveals.

5.5 DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES VERSUS AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

The principal follows democratic procedures in the school in that he holds regular meetings with teachers, learners, the Learners' Representative Council, the School Board and parents. The LRC president substantiated the prevalence of democratic procedures at the school when he testified that learners are represented at all leadership structures of the school. Similarly the SB Chairperson confirmed the holding of regular meetings when he said, unlike neighbouring schools' School Boards who used to have one or two meetings per term; theirs used to have several meetings in a single term.

However, in spite of this rigorous adherence to democratic procedures the principal is perceived to wear a different mask during meetings, that of an autocrat who manipulates discussions in the meetings. It transpired from the data analysis that the principal sometimes makes decisions unilaterally without any dissent from subordinates. According to De Cremer, van Dijke and Bos most often when employees are asked to explain why they claim their supervisors to be autocratic, they say "My supervisor takes decisions in an autocratic manner" and "My supervisor always pushes his or her opinion" (2004: 470).

Guetskow and Kriesberg in Bass & Stogdill argued that although the holding of frequent staff meetings suggests adherence to democratic procedures it does not necessarily imply democratic leadership as:

Leaders may use meetings to "sell" and gain acceptance of their own solutions, as well as to explain their own preferences. These executives see meetings as a way to transmit information and to make announcements, rather than as an opportunity to share information and opinions or to reach decisions (1990: 438).

The practising of democratic procedures without a commitment to democratic leadership is referred to as a token participation/democracy (*Ibid.*).

It surfaced during data analysis that the principal's dictatorial leadership is not only restricted to the meetings but is also reflected in the way he supervises. The principal is perceived as very strict and intolerant of indiscipline; hence he is feared at the school (see Chapter 4: 51). On this behaviour of the principal, Blau and Scott in Bass & Stogdill described the authoritarian supervisor as: "One who, among other things, uses his power to be strict rather than lenient, to supervise closely, and to ensure adherence to procedures (*Ibid.*)."

An observation note in my journal confirms the authoritarian leader's desire for adherence to procedures:

On one occasion the principal stopped boys who were escorted by a teacher (sport organizer) to a soccer exercise during the afternoon study and when the teacher protested against this act, he said the teacher must go and consult the minutes of the last staff meeting (Chapter 4: 51).

When I consulted the minutes myself I learned that it was decided at the said meeting that when there were no tournaments in the immediate future, learners' study time was not to be interrupted. This behaviour of the principal illustrates the principal's rigidity and bureaucratic adherence to rules. He gets things done by the book and hence likes his followers to do likewise.

The fact that the principal started his teaching career while in exile could have contributed to his authoritarian leadership style, as it is common knowledge that during times of war democratic practices would be inappropriate; whatever the commanding

officer says is followed. This notion of benevolent autocracy is congruent with the picture that has been painted of the principal's authoritarian leadership style.

Although autocratic leadership is portrayed in a negative light, some theorists view it conversely. Penner, Malone, Coughlin, and Herz in Bass and Stogdill, for example, argued that leaders with a high level of discipline are likely to be rated much higher in their overall performance by their superiors (1990: 422-423). Likewise Hise in Bass and Stogdill found that high productivity is often linked to close supervision (*Ibid.*). In a South African context, Nongauza found that the success of the principal in his study was partly due to the fact that learners knew their boundaries and what was expected of them when they were governed by strict rules (2004: 138).

On the notion of leaders projecting both democratic and autocratic behaviours simultaneously, Sober and Wilson (in Bennis & Nanus 1985: 15) argued that all effective leaders are driven by motivational pluralism, which is the view that they have both egoistic (self-centered) and altruistic (unselfish) desires. They conclude: "This is why everyday leaders shouldn't be expected to be like Mother Theresa" (*Ibid.*).

The principal's eagerness to embrace being with other people is not restricted to meetings only, but it is espoused in his everyday life. The next section looks at this particular aspect of the principal.

5.6 COMMUNITY METAPHOR

.... effective leadership derives from a team effort instead of an individual effort, hence I emphasize teamwork, commitment and hard work in my leadership (Principal).

These were the words of the principal when he was stressing the importance of teamwork in the school. Kouzes and Posner contended that leaders from all professions, economic sectors, and around the globe when asked about how they managed to succeed, always said: “You can’t do it alone. Leadership is not a solo act; it’s a team effort (2002: 241).” Likewise Katzenbach and Smith (in Lumsden & Lumsden 2000: 29) added that in every high-performance team they investigated, “leadership is shared... The leader’s role remains, but it is mostly ceremonial or for the benefit of outsiders”. The contemporary interest in ‘distributed’ leadership underlines this tendency. MacBeath (2005: 349-366) in his exploration of what distributed leadership looked like in practice and how it was viewed by headteachers and teachers in the UK, found distributed leadership to be a developing process in which leadership is multifaceted and not hierarchical although the accountability remains with the principal. According to him the different processes of leadership distribution can be described under six headings, viz. distribution formally, pragmatically, strategically, incrementally, opportunistically and culturally (2005: 356).

The data suggest that the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School does not operate in isolation but within a team; he regards himself as a member of the school family and hence collaborates with teachers, learners and parents in whatever is done at the school. It seems collaboration is a key feature in teamwork, and according to Kayser collaboration is:

...a joint effort between two or more people, free from hidden agendas, to produce an output in response to a common goal or shared priority. Often the final output is greater than what any of the individuals could have produced working alone (1994: 28).

It emerged from the data that collaboration was evident at Ruacana Senior Secondary School. In addition to the class visits that are conducted by members of management; teachers have also created a family bond among themselves characterized by regular subject group discussions in which they share techniques and strategies of maximizing their teaching in their respective subjects. This notion according to Sergiovanni promotes professionalism which no longer requires direct leadership as teachers possess internal

motivation which enables them to work hard toward realizing a goal that they believe in (1992: 42).

On the basis of this family bond that prevails at the school I draw the inference that the principal has moulded the school into a community. Fielding (as cited in Waghid 2002: 2) stressed that what constitutes a community is not the relationship among the members of the organisation but a sense of caring and an attitude of “swim or sink together,” which literally means not to let each other down but to involve themselves personally and willingly in a collective action (Chapter 2: 24).

To ensure that his followers are cognizant of his membership to the team the principal rarely uses the word “I” or “you”; most often he uses the word “we.” Sergiovanni (2001: 77) believed that communities are organized around relationships in that they create social structures that unify and bind people to a set of shared values and ideas which provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of “we” from “I” (Chapter 2: 24). As already reported, building relationships is one of the features of the principal’s leadership.

The LRC Chairperson in much the same way pointed out that the principal is not only a member of the teachers’ community but a member of the learners’ community too: “During sport and fund-raising activities the principal is usually among the learners like he is one of them and the learners feel comfortable with him in their midst (see Chapter 4: 53).” The principal’s ‘membership’ of the learners’ community is further justified by the fact that he knows them all by name even though there are more than 500 at the school. On this act Kouzes & Posner (2002: 20 & 23) explained that leadership is first about the relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow; because success in leadership is a function of how well people work and play together (see Chapter 2: 17).

The manner in which the principal relates to the teachers and learners at the school is typical of a father to his children. He always wants to be with them and share in their joy. Similarly Jean-Louis in her study of organisational culture and leadership in a Catholic High School in South Africa found the female principal of Loreto High School to portray a ‘mother figure’ at the school characterized by her understanding and caring attitude (2004: 77). These scenarios suggest that some leaders bring to their workplace the roles they play in their community or family as well, such as that of a caring father or mother.

Once the principal adopts this father/mother role with his teachers and learners, he/she automatically becomes their servant as he/she sees to it that they are always taken good care of; hence I now turn to the notion of servant leadership.

5.7 SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Do to others as you would have them do to you - Jesus in Luke 6: 31.

This biblical verse has a special meaning for the principal as he treats teachers the way he would like them to treat the learners. The data suggest that the principal has care and concern for teachers, learners and parents. On this aspect the HOD asserted that the principal greets teachers cordially and regularly enquires about their well-being (see Chapter 4: 52). This caring attitude of a leader toward followers is regarded as a key feature of leadership by Yukl (2002: 50) who describes a leader who has emphasis on consideration for subordinates as one who “acts in a friendly and supportive manner, shows concern for subordinates, and looks out for their welfare” (see Chapter 2: 18).

The principal’s care and concern for parents and learners are depicted in distinct ways. He shows his moral obligation towards parents through his ongoing negotiations with them regarding the payment of school development fund and the purchasing of school

uniforms for their children. In much the same way Kovach (working draft) in his study of the principal's role in motivating teachers in a primary school in Grahamstown, South Africa, found the principal's care to go beyond the school yard: The principal goes out in the community to assist parents where she can, as she believes that you need to have happy parents to have happy learners who in turn will be able to learn effectively at school.

Similarly the principal's frequent visits to the hostel were aimed at familiarising himself with the conditions learners live under and the kind of food they eat. This is a further testimony of his genuine care and concern for the learners. In her study of resilient schools in South Africa, Christie found that concern for the wellbeing of learners outside of school as well as inside the school was among the notable characteristics depicted by the principals she interviewed (2001: 53). Nongauza (2004: 104) in his study of the role of the principal in an academically successful farm school also found that the principal of Rocklands had care and concern for learners, teachers and even the community members. Nongauza further commented that the principal's care for learners was demonstrated by her allowing those who stay far to sleep over at the school during examinations (*Ibid.*). She also provided learners with transport and food especially in the evenings when they were studying for examinations (Nongauza 2004: 76, 115).

The ways in which the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School shows his care for learners, teachers and parents correspond with the remarks of Noddings (in Cunningham and Cordeiro 2000: 210) that caring includes among other things modeling, which means a leader must demonstrate to the people that he cares, rather than simply saying it.

The principal's behaviour of care and concern for subordinates suggests that he has adopted a position of a 'servant' as he goes out of his way to serve his followers. This act relates to the conception of servant leadership. Robert Greenleaf (online) who coined the phrase, described servant leadership in this way: "The servant-leader is servant first... It

begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.” He further asserted that: “Leadership must primarily meet the needs of others. The focus of servant leadership is on others rather than upon self and on understanding of the role of the leader as a servant” (Stone *et al.* 2004: 352).”

In much the same way the notion of “Ubuntu,” which literally means “We are what we are because of others,” has been part of the African culture for centuries and resonates strongly with a servant. While contemplating servant leadership images of great leaders such as Nelson Mandela come to mind. Nelson Mandela is one of the greatest servant leaders of the world who has displayed an egoless nature when one considers the immense challenges that he had to face to walk to freedom. He sacrificed his freedom and comfort for 27 years in order to meet the needs of his followers in the African National Congress (ANC). De Cremer *et al.* argued that the concepts of self-sacrifice shows similarities to servant leadership approach which suggest that leaders are those who lead by serving others (2004: 467).

In spite of the fact that the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School has been projected to be a servant leader, it came to light in the data analysis that he has not lost sight of the school objectives/goals. Schwahn and Spady argued that: “while the term service sounds soft, the duty is hard; while service leaders have hearts of gold, they have nerves of steel (2002: 104).” A lesson that one learns from this argument is that while servant leaders ‘serve their followers first’ organisational objectives are not ignored in totality but rather given a secondary emphasis. The servant leader hopes and trusts that once followers are served they will undertake actions that are in the best interest of the organisation (Stone *et al.* 2004: 355). However the principal’s rigidity and compliance with rules referred to earlier may be seen to suggest a contradiction to his servant leadership, but conversely he is perceived to be someone who selects specific forms of behaviour that *simultaneously reflects* a concern for both task and people as indicated in the theme: *balanced leadership*.

The hope and trust that the servant leaders have that once followers are served they will eventually fulfill their tasks is clear testimony that servant leaders too have a vision for the organisation. I now discuss vision and mission under the theme strategic leadership in the next section.

5.8 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

I have a dream - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Strategic planning is analogous to a dream about a condition of the organisation that is better than what now exists. However, simply dreaming is of course not enough; there needs to be planning and systematic working towards a better future. Davidoff & Lazarus (2002: 79) referred to strategic planning as “A rational process of goal-setting and planning that is pursued in most organisations.”

It came to light during data analysis that the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School plans ahead, and to make sure that stakeholders will be supporters of the plans at the implementation stage, he plans jointly with them right from the development stage up to the time of implementation. They have set Vision 2020 for the school which stipulates that by the year 2020 the school must be a leading institution of academic excellence in the country so that it can be in a position to contribute to the attainment of the national development framework, Vision 2030 (see Chapter 4: 56). Mary Parker Follett in Bennis & Nanus (1985: 90) argued that:

.... the most successful leader of all is one who sees another picture not yet actualized. He sees the things which belong in his present picture but which are not yet there.... Above all, he should make his co-workers see

that it is not his purpose which is to be achieved, but a common purpose, born of the desires and the activities of the group.

Similarly, Schwahn and Spady remarked that “visionary leaders look far beyond the tried and true... and establish a road map of where their organizations must go” (2002: 25). Likewise Appelbaum, Bartolomucci, Beaumier, Boulanger, Corrigan, Dore, Girrard & Serroni (2004: 18) posited that:

Leadership is defined as ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals and in today’s dynamic world we need leaders to challenge the status quo, to create visions of the future, and to inspire organizational members to want to achieve the visions.

In addition to the Vision, the principal has ensured that there is a set of Values outlined in the Mission statement which spell out what they believe in or stand for and how they intend to accomplish the school’s aims. *The Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development* (Department of Education, 1996:29) emphasized the value driven mission:

The approach we are advocating emphasizes that everything is driven by the values and mission of the school and that these are developed and owned by more than just the principal, or some outside authority. A true culture of teaching and learning, as well as a supportive management culture can only thrive in a school where the major stakeholders feel ownership of the school’s mission and ethos. However it is insufficient merely to adopt a formal mission statement. The mission statement is only useful to the extent that it provides a visible symbol of what the teachers; parents and students in the school really believe (See Chapter 2: 13).

Values are at the heart of leadership in every organisation, Blatchford in Kydd et al (2003: 89) said:

The importance of values permeates everything you do as senior managers. If these values were not in place then a school would lack a

sense of purpose and people in it would not know what they were trying to achieve.... However, having a mission was not just parroting fine-sounding statements but enacting those values through the work undertaken in school.

The continuous excellent performance of an organisation year after year is not something that is planned once off. On this aspect Kayser commented that in order for a leader to maintain the success of a group, he/she must continuously remind and prepare his/her followers every year to approach the new challenges that are in store for them with renewed vigor and determination and forget the success of the previous years (1994: 35). He said a leader who would like to sustain the success of a group would always say: “What happened last year is water over the dam [*sic*]. It’s a new year now with new challenges. We must rededicate ourselves. We need to go back to the fundamentals; we need to start with the basics” (*Ibid.*).

It also emerged from the data analysis that the principal is a highly organized leader and a strong manager. He has put structures and procedures in place to facilitate the achievement of the goals of the school. Structures such as the organograms and an estimate of the school’s budget were observed in the offices and staffroom. Davidoff & Lazarus (2002:103) described an organogram as a diagram which reflects the structure and procedure of an organisation, hence it provides the basis for the way systems interrelate within the school such as: “The line of responsibility and authority within and between these structures, information flow between these structures, and lines of accountability.” For LaFasto and Larson organisation structure is a formal pattern of relationship among the various roles and responsibilities of an organisation which adds clarity, stability, and discipline to the coordination effort of an organisation (2001: 173).

However, leaders of organisations do not only set organisational vision, but also steer and inspire the organisational members toward the attainment of the vision and in order to do this they have to lead from the front; therefore exemplary leadership will be discussed next.

5.9 LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The principal is conscious of his leadership role and makes sure that it is seen and felt in the school by being visible and leading from the front. Although the principal said his visibility in the school is meant to show teachers that he cares about what is going on in the school and classrooms in particular, I got the impression that in reality he *feels* his responsibilities of planning, directing/guiding and controlling the activities of his subordinates and hence he goes out to fulfill them. This particular behaviour of the principal delineates his emphasis on task, as the front position he occupies is a strategic position from which he monitors and guides the implementation of his plans.

It emerged strongly from the data that the principal's exemplary leadership is characterized by time-consciousness, commitment to teaching and care for others. About this attitude the principal said it is logically a contradiction for him to expect teachers and learners to go beyond the call of duty if he does not do it himself, that is why he always leads from the front. Cawood and Gibbon (1985: 3) in much the same way contended that: "to lead means basically to be out in front, to go ahead with the intention of being followed" (See Chapter 2: 17).

From the example the principal set I deduce that it is his way of sending a non-verbal but yet a strong and clear message to the subordinates - how he wants them to go about their daily duties. This act of the principal resonates with the Chinese proverb that says: "Not the cry but the flight of the wild duck leads the flock to fly and follow." The principal's punctuality, commitment and caring attitude is done with a purpose, instead of merely talking about these behaviours, he shows the subordinates what he wants them to do, just as the wild duck would fly to send a message to the flock to follow suit. Likewise Kauaria (2002: 64) argued that leadership is role modeling as leaders are expected to set a

positive example to the followers. She further asserted that “role modeling is very important as followers learn by identifying themselves with what their leaders do” (*Ibid.*).

The exemplary leadership of the principal is said to have earned him admiration and respect among teachers and learners; they speak highly of it and claim to try hard to emulate him. I can conclude from the attitude of the followers that the principal has an inspirational influence. Bass & Stogdill (1990: 207) asserted that, “inspirational behaviors of leaders included instilling pride in individuals and units, using pep talks, setting examples with their own behaviour of what is expected and building confidence and enthusiasm.” For Avolio and Bass in Stone *et al.* (2004: 351) leaders with inspirational behaviours inspire and motivate others by “providing meaning and challenge to their followers’ work.” Inspiration motivation is one of the established four primary behaviours that constitute transformational leadership.

Dedication to work surfaced from the respondents’ views to be one of the characteristics of the principal that enables him to make the school successful. The HOD posited that the principal concentrates on the school 24/7; he said a fair description of the principal would be that the school is his “whole life” (see Chapter 4: 45). Dedication is a very important characteristic in a leader as it helps to boost the energy and morale of subordinates when they see the leader oozing so much energy at his work. In her study of female principalship in Namibia Kawana similarly found that principals with high concern for their work played a major role in boosting learners’ achievement, because they instill this attitude in their teachers and learners (2004: 52). This attitude of dedication and commitment which principals instill in their followers is one of the prime constituents of organisational culture, which is my next theme.

5.10 CREATING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

An organization's culture is made up of those aspects of the organization that give it a particular climate or feel. Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual. It is that distinctive constellation of beliefs, values, work styles, and relationships that distinguish one organization from another (Harrison & Stokes in Appelbaum *et al.* 2004: 17).

It emerged from the data analysis that teachers and learners at Ruacana Senior Secondary School have shared beliefs, values and work styles that enable the school to maintain its good performance year after year. During the time the principal was away on study leave for four years the school did not show any decline in performance. An important point that surfaced during data analysis is that when the principal left for studies, he left behind a legacy of academic excellence at the school (see Chapter 4: 62). During his time at the school he instilled in the teachers and learners a culture of time-consciousness and commitment to teaching and learning. This culture helped the school to hold on to the good performance it was known for over the years.

Although this culture had been at the school all along it became only clearly visible after the principal's departure. Notwithstanding the fact that there was an acting principal at the school, teachers showed that they could stand on their own feet and did not need somebody to prop them up. This attitude is attested to by the fact that teachers and learners continued to work hard, in fact they were working even harder in order to maintain the performance the school was known for. As a result this culture became deep-rooted in the school and has been maintained even up to now that the principal is back at the school. Sergiovanni (1992: 45) referred to this attitude as a very important one in an organisation as once teachers adopt it direct leadership diminishes, self-management takes hold, and substitutes for leadership becomes deeply embedded in the school (see Chapter 2: 23). This claim by Sergiovanni resonates with my observation at the school: Although the school starts at 07h00, teachers start to arrive at the school as early as 06h00 and notwithstanding the fact that the school goes out at 13h00, they all

manage to come back to school at 14h00 where they sit in the staffroom and do their preparations for the next day and marking up to 16h00 when they knock off officially for the day (see Chapter 4: 63). Similarly teachers' commitment to teaching and assisting learners was delineated by their return to the evening studies; I observed that although it is not compulsory for the teachers to return in the evening many of them do return to assist learners with home work or preparations for tests, etc. (see Chapter 4: 63).

The culture of Ruacana Senior Secondary School is not only depicted by the daily practices of teachers and learners but it also manifested on the notice boards in the school and flannel boards in the offices and staffroom. Pictures, mottos, and information which clearly depict the features of the organisation culture of the school such as commitment, time on task, the importance of education, school rules, vision and mission statement and school budget are displayed on these boards. I believe the rationale for doing this is for the teachers and learners to keep these values and beliefs in their consciousness and hence never to fail upholding them.

Jean Louis (2004: 20) asserted that there are two schools of thought regarding the creation of culture in terms of whether the leader shapes or is shaped by organisational culture (See Chapter 2: 25). It seems in this case that the school's organisational culture is strongly influenced and shaped by the principal. This view is borne out by literature. Schein (1992: 15) argued that "culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin in that leaders first create culture when they create groups and organisation (see Chapter 2: 26)." Similarly Bush (2003: 169) asserted that leaders have the main responsibility for generating and sustaining culture in schools by communicating core values and beliefs both within the organisation and to external stakeholders (See Chapter 2: 26). What makes these claims by Schein (1992) and Bush (2003) congruent with the culture of Ruacana Senior Secondary School is the fact that the principal is perceived to have rubbed off his acts of commitment, time-consciousness, and caring onto the teachers and learners through his exemplary leadership. These acts shaped everybody's attitude and behaviour in the school and became common practices. According to Russell (2001: 78)

“leaders primarily shape the cultures of their organisations through modeling important values.” Similarly Jean-Louis (2004: 70) in her study of organisational culture and leadership referred to earlier found that a leader is a symbol of the organisation culture therefore his/her personal life, the language he/she speaks and his/her attitudes and behaviours express that culture. Thus the prevailing attitude at the school which resulted from the behaviour of the principal resonates with the description of organisational culture provided by Davis, Denison, Kotter & Heskett, O’Reilly & Chatman and Wilson in (Rashid, Sambasivan and Rahman 2004: 164). They said: “Organizational culture refers to a set of shared values, beliefs, assumptions, and practices that shape and guide members’ attitude and behavior in the organization (*Ibid.*)”

5.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I wove the findings that emerged from the data analysis with arguments from relevant literature and other research findings in an attempt to provide an in-depth understanding of the participants’ perceptions and experiences of the principal’s leadership role at Ruacana Senior Secondary School. Information from my observation field notes and document analysis played a significant role in supporting the perceptions and experiences of participants.

I discussed in this chapter the findings that emerged from the data using different themes. It surfaced from the interpretation of the role of the principal in this chapter that his leadership is *balanced* in that he focuses on both the realization of the school’s vision and values as outlined in the mission statement as well as on the satisfaction of followers’ needs. The caring attitude that has been associated with the principal in Chapter 4 has culminated in several themes in this chapter. *Transformational leadership* is one such theme; the principal has been portrayed to have established a climate of trust in the school which stirred all members to look beyond their own interest for the good of the school. Hence all the members share in the vision of the school and strive toward its

realization. The theme of *community* came to the fore by virtue of the establishment of sound interpersonal relationships between the principal and teachers and among teachers themselves. These members see themselves as a family/community, and therefore they help each other in any way possible as they regard the success or failure of another as theirs too. Again the principal's caring attitude as depicted in this chapter strongly resonates with the tenets of servant leadership as the principal goes out of his way to satisfy the needs of his followers.

In an attempt to realize the school's vision 2020 the principal focuses on teaching and learning at the school, hence the discussion of *instructional leadership*. Likewise the principal has been projected to be a *strategic leader* who reminds teachers of the ideal picture of the school they should strive to reach as a team. In an attempt to steer and guide the followers to the ideal picture of the school, the principal has been portrayed to be *exemplary* in his leadership. All the words that resonate with exemplary leadership such as: 'walking the talk', 'practises what he preaches', 'models the way', 'not the cry but the fly of the wild duck leads the flock to fly and follow' have flowed freely in this chapter in order to demonstrate his exemplary leadership.

It came to light in this chapter that it is not only the leadership role of the principal that makes Ruacana Senior Secondary School thrive, but also the *organisation culture*. Teachers and learners at this school have a strong working culture that underpins the leadership role of the principal in making the school prosper. This culture is demonstrated by the teachers' and learners' commitment to teaching and learning as well as time management.

Interestingly the principal has also been portrayed to exhibit paradoxical behaviours in his leadership. While he is interpreted to follow democratic procedures, in that, he creates platforms for discussions he is conversely perceived to dictate the discussion the way they suit him which makes his leadership appear autocratic. It seems that successful

leadership, in this case, may be characterized by a blend of seemingly contradictory qualities or sets of behaviours, a phenomenon regarded as ‘normal’ by leadership theorists.

In the next chapter I conclude my study by highlighting my main findings and present recommendations for further research in the field.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present a summary of my main findings, discuss the limitations of the research and make recommendations arising from my findings. Since this study has illuminated other researchable areas related to my study I found it also appropriate to make suggestions for further research in this chapter.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

Several characteristics describing the leadership role of the principal in a successful rural school arose from the data and were encapsulated in the themes discussed in Chapter 5. In this chapter I summarize these characteristics in order to see how successful the study has been in seeking answers to my research question.

The principal has been portrayed to have strong leadership characteristics which enable him to make the school thrive. An overarching characteristic that emerged from the data is that the principal is a balanced leader in that he keeps both orientations of task and people in equilibrium. According to Blake and Mouton (1964) a balanced leader does not choose the best position for either production or people but rather chooses a position that includes both dimensions. This particular trait of the principal has culminated in several

characteristics that explain his emphasis on both task completion and consideration for other people. I will give a brief summary of these characteristics in the next sections.

The findings painted the principal to be a *transformational leader*. The basic assumption of transformational leaders according to Barnett, McCormick and Connors (2001: 25) is that “leaders raise followers’ consciousness levels about the importance and values of designated outcomes and ways of achieving them.” The principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School exhibits the following characteristics that are associated with transformational leadership:

- He nurtures awareness and acceptance of diversities at the school in his subordinates.
- He reminds teachers to act within the broader context of education by enlightening them with the mission statement of the Ministry of Education.
- The principal delegates tasks to teachers and ensures that he keeps in touch with them in order to offer his assistance if needed.

The principal is portrayed as focusing on *teaching and learning* which are regarded in the literature of effective schools as the *core business* of a school. It surfaced that the principal does not only preach about teaching but teaches, hence modeling the way for teachers. Blase and Blase (2000: 134) found this trait in principals to be significant as principals do not only model by teaching alone but also by demonstrating different teaching techniques and ways to maximize positive interactions with learners in classrooms and during conferences. The creation of an enabling learning environment for learners and sufficient time for learning also enjoy priority in the principal leadership. To make sure his focal points are realized in the school the principal is always out and around in the school, walking in the corridors, visiting classrooms and holding conversations with teachers and learners regarding teaching and learning.

The findings also depicted the principal to be a *team player* who shares leadership with others at the school. His inclination of distributing leadership has culminated in *community* becoming the metaphor for Ruacana Senior Secondary School. Hence a family bond exists at the school characterized by greater collaboration as teachers consider each others' failure or success as theirs too. Leadership is not only distributed among teachers, but learners too, as the LRC and class captains are not merely token leaders but active players in the maintenance of discipline and sustaining the academic success of the school.

In much the same way as distributing leadership among the members of the organisation, the principal is perceived to show a sense of *ubuntu* at the school. *Ubuntu* which literally means "I am what I am because of others" is congruent with *servant leadership approach*. According to Russell (2001: 80) "Appreciation of others by servant leaders reflects fundamental personal values that esteem and honour people." It surfaced from the previous chapter that the principal's shows care and concern for teachers, learners and parents.

However, in spite of the principal's emphasis on service for the followers, it emerged strongly from the study that he is a *strategic, visionary leader* who strives to realize the ideal picture of the school. Bennis and Nanus (1985: 90) posited that: "With a vision, the leader provides the all-important bridge from the present to the future of the organization." Respondents asserted that the principal does not plan alone, but jointly with the other stakeholders in education to ensure that they too contribute toward the creation of the vision and hence take ownership of it and strives toward its realization.

Although the vision of the school is owned by every member of the school, the principal is aware of the crucial role his leadership can play in the realization of the vision, hence he *leads by example*. The principal 'walks the talk' in order to inspire and motivate teachers and learners at the school. Through this *exemplary leadership* the principal has

managed to influence the behaviours and attitudes of his followers in that everybody at the school started to do things the way the principal does. As a result the practices of the principal such as time consciousness, commitment and care for others in turn became everybody's practices at the school and hence the *school culture*. Although it is suggested in the literature that each organisation has a unique culture which influences the leader in the way he/she makes decisions and interacts with others (Sergiovanni: 2001: 100; Deal & Peterson 1999: 85) other theorists opined that the leader defines and shapes the organisation culture (Schein 1992: 15; Bush 2003: 169). The school culture of Ruacana Senior Secondary School can be perceived through the daily routine practices of teachers and learners as well as on the school notice boards inside and outside the offices.

A paradoxical finding that emerged from this study is that while the principal follows *democratic procedures*, he is perceived to be *autocratic* in some ways. It emerged that he holds regular meetings with the different stakeholders in education such as teachers, learners, Learners Representative Council, School Board and parents, yet he ends up manipulating discussions in these meetings. Similarly respondents claimed that he supervises closely and is intolerant of indiscipline. Although this feature of the principal is incongruent with the others features that have been painted about him earlier, I believe it is appropriate for a leader to practice authoritarian leadership from time to time as required by the *situation* (situational approach) (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 376) but however not adopting the style as *being* an autocrat would decrease organisational members' satisfaction. For the principal of Ruacana Senior Secondary School the prevalence of autocratic leadership features among his other features is a confirmation of his balanced leadership.

As my goal was to find out how the leadership role of the principal contributes to the success of the school, the picture that emerged from the findings paint the manifold characteristics from which his leadership role stems. The principal is perceived to be a person of sound moral values, an instructional and a strategic leader who leads by

example and hence has managed to shape and guide the culture of the school in the direction of supporting academic excellence.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since I used a case study research method for my study I focused only on one particular school, working with a small sample comprising the principal and four other people occupying leadership positions at the school. Hence my findings are not statistically generalisable.

Moreover, although I was afforded with generous opportunities to gather data on the lived experiences of my participants, the fact that all participants were leaders at the school denied me the opportunity to learn how people at the 'bottom' of the hierarchy - like the ordinary teachers and learners - perceive the leadership role of the principal. They may have different perceptions of the principal's leadership role as his influence is exerted on them more than on those chosen to be participants in the study. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the choice of the sample was a mistake as it was my intention to explore the perceptions and experiences of those people at school who are in positions that underpin the leadership role of the principal. No doubt enlarging the sample would have enriched the data and may have influenced my overall findings, but this would have been beyond the scope of this small-scale study.

Finally, although I have managed to collect my data using all the three data gathering tools I intended to use within two weeks, the time span was clearly not sufficient to perceive every aspect of the principal leadership, especially by means of observation. Here again, the scope of the study imposed limitations on to the extent to which I could immerse myself into the research context.

Despite these limitations I believe my findings to be valid in that I ensured that a link is established between the questions and the objectives of the study. The interpretive paradigm used for my study enabled me to generate rich data from the lived experiences of respondents. Moreover I triangulated and cross-checked the data that emerged by using a combination of interviews, observation and document analysis as my data generating instruments. As discussed in Chapter 3, Stake (1995: 85) postulated that although single cases are not a strong base for generalization, people can learn much from them as they are familiar with other similar cases and they add this one in, “thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize, a new opportunity to modify old generalizations.” This type of generalization is referred to as naturalistic (Stake & Trumbull in Stake *Ibid.*). Stake & Trumbull claimed that: “Naturalistic generalizations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (Stake 1995: 85).

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

It emerged from the study that even though rural schools are perceived to perform poorly due to lack of resources, there are schools that have managed to beat the odds. Hence the following recommendations are made on the basis of what emerged from a study of one such school:

- The leadership role of the principal contributes significantly to the success of a school, irrespective of whether the school is in an urban or rural area. Many principals pay more attention to the resources that are not available and fail to put to good use the resources – including human resources - that are at their disposal to counter what is not available. This study can be regarded as a wake-up call to principals especially those in rural areas to reassess how their leadership (or the lack of it) contributes to the status quo of their schools.

- Rural schools need strategic leaders who do not get discouraged by challenges, but who express a vision, get buy-in, and implement it.
- All the structures of the Ministry of Education and stakeholders must gear all their efforts and activities toward supporting teaching and learning as they are the school's central activities.
- Since leadership research is faced with the dilemma of task/person orientations, it has become a challenge to the leaders of today to ensure that they keep these dimensions in equilibrium.
- It emerged from this study that organisational culture plays a key role in the success or failure of a school, therefore it is incumbent upon principals to assess if the prevailing organisational culture supports academic excellence at the school or not. If not then it is the obligation of the principal to redefine and shape it.

6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

My purpose in this study was to understand how the principal's leadership role contributes to the success of a rural school as there are only a few rural schools that perform well despite facing the same challenges and circumstances as their neighbouring schools. However I do not think it is only the principal's leadership role that can help a rural school to thrive, therefore I would like to make suggestions for further research in this field:

- To explore how the organisational culture of a school in a rural area can contribute to the success of the school.

- To explore teachers' and learners' perceptions of the school's organisational culture with a view to finding out if they really espouse the underlying values of the school and how they contribute to the school's culture.
- To explore ways and means principals use to motivate teachers to transcend their own personal interests for the success of the school.
- To explore teachers' perceptions of how they would like to be led in order to contribute positively to the success of a rural school.

References

- Appelbaum, S., Bartolomucci, N., Beaumier, E., Boulanger, J., Corrigan, R., Dore, I., et al.** (2004). Organizational citizenship behaviour: A case study of culture, leadership and trust. *Journal of Management Decision*, 42(1), 3-40.
- Barnett, K., McCormick, J., Conners, R.** (2001). Transformational leadership in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 39(1), 24-46.
- Bass, B., M.** (1990). Bass & Stogdill's handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications (3rd ed.). New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers.
- Bassey, M.** (1999). Case study research in educational settings. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bennis, W., & Nanus, B.** (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S.** (1964). *The managerial grid*. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J.** (1998). Handbook of instructional leadership: How really good principals promote teaching and learning. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J.** (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Education Administration*, 38(2), 130-141.
- Burgess, R. G.** (1989). *The ethics of educational research*. New York: Falmer Press.
- Bush, T.** (2003). Theories of educational leadership and management (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Capper, C. A.** (1993). Rural community influences on effective school practices. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 31(3). Retrieved on 10 September 2006 from the Worldwide web:
<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/Insight/viewContentItem.do?contentType=Article&contentId=839004>
- Cawood, J., & Gibbon, J.** (1981). Educational leadership: Staff development. Cape Town: Nasou.
- Christie, P.** (2001). Improving school quality in South Africa: A study of schools that have succeeded against the odds. *Journal of Education*, 26, 40-65.

- Cobb, C.** (2005). Literacy teams: Sharing leadership to improve student learning. *Reading Teacher Journal*, 58(5), 472-474.
- Coetzee, D., & Le Roux, A.** (2001). The challenge of quality and relevance in South African education: A philosophical perspective. *South African Journal of Education*, 21(4), 208-212.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K.** (2000). *Research methods in education* (5th ed.). London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N.** (1998). *Charismatic leadership in organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Cunningham, W. C., & Cordeiro, P. A.** (2000). *Education administration*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Davidoff, S., & Lazarus, S.** (2002). *The learning school*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Davies, B.** (2001). Rethinking schools and school leadership for the twenty-first century: Changes and challenges. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(4), 196-206.
- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D.** (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- De Cremer, D., van Dijke, M., & Bos, A.** (2004). Distributive justice moderating the effects of sacrificial leadership. *Leadership & Organizational Development Journal*, 25(5), 466-475.
- Fullan, M.** (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M.** (2005). *Leadership & sustainability*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Ghandi, M.** (online). *Articles on and by Ghandi on various subjects: Quotations*. Retrieved on 12 September 2006, from the Worldwide web:
<http://en.thinkexist.com/quotation/14109.html>.
- Greenleaf, R., K.** (online) *Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership: Servant leadership*. Retrieved on 14 September 2006, from the Worldwide web:
<http://www.greenleaf.org/leadership/servant-leadership/What-is-Servant-Leadership.html>.
- Halawah, I.** (2005). The relationship between effective communication of High School principals and school climate. *Journal of Education*, 126(2), 334-345.

- Hautala, T. M.** (2006). The relationship between personality and transformational leadership. *Journal of Management Development*, 25(8), 777-794.
- Holy Bible.** (2005). *New international version*. Cape Town: Struik Christian Books.
- Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G.** (1996). *Educational administration* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- HSRC.** (2005). *Emerging voices: A report on education in South African rural communities*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Jean Louis, L. C.** (2004). An investigation of female leaders' perceptions of organizational culture and leadership in a Catholic high school. Unpublished master's thesis, Grahamstown, Rhodes University.
- Kauaria, V.** (2002). An investigation of female leaders' perceptions of themselves and their roles as leaders in a Catholic school. Unpublished master's thesis, Grahamstown, Rhodes University.
- Kawana, I.** (2004). Inspectors' of education perceptions of female principalship in the *Rundu region of Namibia*. Unpublished master's thesis, Grahamstown, Rhodes University.
- Kayser, T. A.** (1994). *Team power*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- King . M. L. Jr.** (oline) *King's dream: Most see it developing*. Retrieved on 10 September 2006, from the Worldwide web:
http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/m/martin_luther_king_jr.html
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z.** (2002). *The leadership challenge* (3rd ed.). San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kovach, J.** (working draft). The role of the principal in motivating teachers in a primary school in Grahamstown, South Africa.
- Kruger, A. G.** (2003). Instructional leadership: The impact of culture of teaching and learning in two effective secondary schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 23(3), 206-211.
- Kumar, R.** (1996). *Research methodology: A step-by –step guide for beginners*. London: Sage Publications.
- Kydd, L., Anderson, L., & Newton, W.** (Ed.). (2003). *Leading people and teams in education*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

- LaFasto, F., & Larson, C.** (2001). *When teams work best*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G.** (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D.** (2000). *Communicating in groups and teams* (3rd ed.). Belmont: Thomson Learning.
- MacBeath, J.** (2005). Leadership as distributed: A matter of practice. *Journal of School Leadership and Management*, 25(4), 349-366.
- Mathews, L. J., & Crow, G. M.** (2003). *Being and becoming a principal*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Maxwell, J. A.** (2005). *Qualitative research design*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Merriam, S. B.** (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B.** (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mertens, D. M.** (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Neuman, W. L.** (2000). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Nongauza, A. D. M** (2004). *The role of the principal in an academically successful farm school: A case study*. Unpublished master's thesis, Grahamstown, Rhodes University.
- Patton, M. Q.** (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Potter, D., & Powell, G.** (1992). *Managing a better school*. Melbourne: Athenaeum Press.
- Preedy, M.** (1993). *Managing the effective school*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Rashid, Z. A., Sambasivan, M., & Rahman, A. A.** (2004). The influence of organizational culture on attitudes towards organizational change. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 25(2).

- Russell, R. F.** (2001). The role of values in servant leadership. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 22(2), 76-83.
- Schein, E.** (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schwahn, C. J., & Spady, W. G.** (2002). *Total leaders*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press.
- Sergiovanni, T. J.** (1992). *Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sergiovanni, T. J.** (2001). *The principalship: A reflective practice perspective*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- South Africa.** Department of Education. (1995). *Educationalive: A MEDU newsletter for school teachers*, 3(2), 1-16.
- South Africa.** Department of Education. (1996). *Report of the task team on Education Management Development*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Stake, R. E.** (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Stone, A. G., Russell, R. F., & Patterson, K. (2004). Transformational versus servant leadership: A difference in leader focus. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25(4), 349-361.
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R.** (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods* (3rd ed.): A guide book and resource. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Titus, D., P.** (2004). The implementation of multi-grade in rural schools in the Keetmanshoop education region: Leadership and management challenges. Unpublished master's research report, Grahamstown, Rhodes University.
- Wallace, R. C., Jr.** (1996). *From vision to practice: The art of Educational leadership*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Company.
- Waghid, J.** (2002). Education development in rural schools: Exemplifying the personal dimension of community. *South African Journal of Education*, 22(1), 1-5.
- Yin, R. K.** (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Yukl, G.** (2002). *Leadership in organizations* (5th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall International.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF AGREEMENT - PRINCIPAL

Rhodes University
Grahamstown
Republic of South Africa
6140
2006-05-16

The Principal
Ruacana Vocational S. S. S
Omusati Education region
Ruacana
Republic of Namibia

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Application for a research site

I am Uerivangera Chris Tjivikua, a full-time student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Republic of South Africa. I am studying towards a Masters degree in education in the field of Education Leadership and Management (ELM) and my research interest lies in the leadership role of the principal in a successful rural school. I found your school to be most suitable for my study as it has produced good academic results year after year despite being located in a rural area. Hence it is my humble request to the

principal and the chairperson of the school board to afford me the opportunity to conduct my investigation at the school for at least the first three weeks of July 2006 (i.e. the 3rd to the 21st of July 2006). I can assure you that this study will not cause any disturbance to the daily school programme.

Semi-structured interviews and observation will be the primary instruments for data generation while document analysis will be used as a secondary data generating instrument. My sampling will comprise the principal and individuals who occupy leadership positions which underpin the role of the principal at the school, that is, head of departments, the student representative council chairperson, the school board chairperson and the circuit inspector.

This piece of research will not only be of great significance to myself as a student and novice researcher, but it is likely to make a contribution to education in Namibia, especially the rural schools that are lagging behind the rest in the country in key performance area such as examination results.

Should you have any questions regarding my request, please feel free to contact me at these numbers:

Cell: 0027-783570745

E-mail address: g06t5992@campus.ru.ac.za

Thanks in advance.

Yours in Education

Uerivangera Chris Tjivikua

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF AGREEMENT – CIRCUIT INSPECTOR

Rhodes University
Grahamstown
Republic of South Africa
6140
2006-05-16

The Inspector of Education
Omusati Education region
Ruacana Vocational S. S. S
Republic of Namibia

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Application for a research site

I am Uerivangera Chris Tjivikua, a full time student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Republic of South Africa. I am studying towards a Masters degree in education in the field of Education Leadership and Management (ELM) and my research interest lies in the leadership role of the principal in a successful rural school. I found Ruacana Vocational S. S. S to be most suitable for my study as the school has produced good academic results year after year despite being located in a rural area. Hence it is my humble request to you as the inspector of education for this school to afford me the opportunity of conducting my investigation at the school and in the same vein I would like to invite you to be a participant in my study. The study will take at least the first three weeks of July 2006 (i.e. the 3rd to the 21st of July 2006) and be rest assured that it will not cause any disturbance to the normal school programme.

Semi-structured interviews and observation will be the primary instruments for data generation while document analysis will be used as a secondary data generating instrument. My sampling will comprise the principal and individuals who occupy leadership positions which underpin the role of the principal at the school, that is, head of departments, the student representative council chairperson, the school board chairperson and the circuit inspector. The interview will focus on how the participants experience and perceive the leadership role of the principal in sustaining the success at the school. All interviews will be tape-recorded. Since I am planning to spend three weeks at the school I will also observe leadership related behaviors and events as they unfold at the school.

This piece of research will not only be of great significance to myself as a student and novice researcher, but it is likely to make a contribution to education in Namibia especially the rural schools that are lagging behind the rest in the country when it comes to key performance areas such as examination results.

Similarly I have sent letters to the Regional Education Director and the principal. Should you have any questions regarding my request, please feel free to contact me at these numbers:

Cell: 0027-783570745/E-mail address: g06t5992@campus.ru.ac.za

Thanks in advance.

Yours in Education

Uerivangera Chris Tjivikua

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF AGREEMENT – REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Rhodes University
Grahamstown
Republic of South Africa
6140
2006-05-16

The Director of Education

Omusati Education region

Republic of Namibia

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Application for a research site

I am Uerivangera Chris Tjivikua, a full time student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Republic of South Africa. I am studying towards a Masters degree in education in the field of Education Leadership and Management (ELM) and my research interest lies in the leadership role of the principal in a successful rural school. I found Ruacana Vocational S. S. S in your region to be most suitable for my study as the school has produced good academic results year after year despite being located in the rural area. My research investigation/study will take at least the first three weeks of July 2006 (i.e. the 3rd to the 21st of July 2006) and I can assure you that it will not cause any disturbance to the normal daily school programme.

The purpose of this letter is to solicit your permission as a regional director of Education to allow me to carry out my study at this specified school.

This piece of research will not only be of great significance to myself as a student and novice researcher, but it is likely to make a contribution to education in Namibia, especially the rural schools that are lagging behind the rest in the country when it comes to key performance areas such as examination results. The study will also offer important information to principals and inspectors of education in charge of schools located in the rural areas as well as the ministry of education in Namibia as a whole.

I have also sent letters to the circuit inspector and the principal.

Should you have any questions regarding my request, please feel free to contact me at these numbers:

Cell.: 0027-783570745

E-mail address: g06t5992@campus.ru.ac.za

Thanks in advance.

Yours in Education

Uerivangera Chris Tjivikua

APPENDIX D

The research protocol form

I-----hereby agree to participate in an interview with Uerivangera Chris Tjivikua, a Namibian student at Rhodes University in the Republic of South Africa. I understand that he will enquire about how I experience and perceive the leadership role of the principal in sustaining success at the school. I further understand that I have the right to withdraw or change any information I provided in the interview.

Signed: _____

Date: _____