

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY INTO VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS'
PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPATIVE
MANAGEMENT IN A HIGH SCHOOL IN THE CALA DISTRICT,
EASTERN CAPE**

Submitted by

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**In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in
Education (Education Leadership and Management)**

DECEMBER 2005

ABSTRACT

Although the word “participation” has been with mankind for a long time and is widely used by writers on management areas, it still remains difficult to define precisely what it means. As a result, “participation” is one of the most misunderstood and confusing ideas that have emerged from the field of human relations. This study seeks to explore the perceptions and understanding that the various stakeholders have about participative management. The purpose is to find out the meaning and interpretations the stakeholders attach to the idea of participation.

This study is an interpretive case study of a Senior Secondary School in the Cala District of the Eastern Cape. A phenomenological approach was employed in data gathering using two data collection tools namely questionnaires and interviews. The collected data provided insight into stakeholders’ views on participative management, highlighted challenges around the implementation of participative management, and revealed strategies to be utilized in promoting participation.

The findings reveal that participation is a controversial idea that is easier said than done. There is no recipe for the implementation of a participative approach; it depends on the situation and nature of the subordinates. Furthermore, organization members need to adopt new thinking patterns in order to be responsive to change. Open communication emerges as the key to having genuine participation. However, participation still brings anxiety and fear of losing power to those managers who do not take kindly to it.

It is recommended that good interpersonal relations should be maintained at all times to promote participation and that for schools to be effective, partnership with parents and stakeholders is essential.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is naturally impossible to undertake and complete a study of this nature without the active support of a considerable number of people. I therefore have cause to be grateful to those individuals who assisted me in one way or another in completing this study.

First of all I would like to give thanks to the Almighty God who gave me strength and courage to complete this study.

My deepest gratitude goes to all my research participants from whom I solicited data. This work would not have been possible without them.

I gratefully acknowledge the advice and encouragement I received from my supervisor Prof. Hennie Van der Mescht whose guidance and positive remarks made me feel confident about myself.

I am deeply indebted to Collins Kodua-Agyekum, a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg who showed me how to arrange my work in an acceptable and scholarly way.

My profound gratitude also goes to the principal and SGB of the school under study for allowing me entry into their school and making their teaching staff available for interviewing.

The acknowledgement would not be complete without the mention of Miss G. Ntsendwane who assisted in typing my work. I have cause to be grateful to her.

Finally I am also equally indebted to my entire family for always being by my side.

DEDICATION

This work is lovingly dedicated to my three children, Mfuneko, Onesimo and Wendy whom I admire most as gifts that God has given to me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING MY RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on introducing the research study to the readers. It seeks to explain why I have developed an interest in investigating the phenomenon of participative management. The chapter also points to reasons why the study should be considered worth undertaking and who will benefit from the study itself. The context in which the study is undertaken and also the aims and objectives of the study are all highlighted in this chapter. The chapter concludes by drawing attention to the way in which the thesis itself has been arranged and what each chapter in the thesis contains.

1.2 MY INTEREST

In my fifteen years of teaching at High School I have noticed with concern that some High School principals and teachers encounter numerous managerial problems which in most cases result in strikes and stay-aways by learners and which can also lead to apathy with regards to school matters by members of the public. On reflection, I came to the assumption that some of these problems could be partially attributed to the inability and failure of these principals to adapt to the new democratic system of participative management that is currently being advocated by the Department of Education for schools.

The South African Schools Act of 1997 requires that schools should become open systems in which members of the community, teachers and other stakeholders are actively involved. During the informal discussions I had with some principals in the area on participative management, I discovered with disbelief that despite their being aware of the contents of the South African Schools Act, they are reluctant and unprepared to accept members of the community and stakeholders as equal partners in the control and management of schools. This reluctance is born out of fear by some

principals, that adopting an open systems approach would result in members of the public and stakeholders taking over the control of schools and principals would then end up losing the power they had been enjoying. Obviously this notion is based on the traditional school of thought that schools are the domains of principals and teachers only and that ordinary members of the public are not knowledgeable enough to understand the processes of management of schools.

I have also learned that even in schools where principals claimed to be applying the principle of participation, there are conflicts and tensions between teachers on one side and community members on the other. I came to realize that this power struggle between teachers and community members could be the result of the different ways in which these groups interpret and understand participative management. Consequently I was tempted to investigate the nature of the involvement of these various stakeholders in school management with a view to establishing how they perceive and understand the idea of participative management.

In this research study I have attempted to find answers to the following pertinent questions (a) How do educators and other stakeholders understand and make sense of participative management? (b) How do schools manage stakeholders' involvement, this currently being such a problem area for most schools? (c) How do Schools' Management Teams (SMTS) employ democratic management processes such as decision-making and teamwork?

1.3 CONTEXT OF THIS RESEARCH

Participative management is a complicated process, complicated by the fact that we as individuals have our own idiosyncrasies and our different ways of interpreting organisational reality, hence different educational organizations have different ways of implementing the idea. A participative style of management is recommended in most governmental policies and legislation in South Africa today for a number of different reasons. For example the Task Team on Education Management Development emphasized the fact that management should not be seen as the task of the few (South Africa: DoE 1996: 8). The policy recommended that management

should rather be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organizations engage. Management is about doing and working with people to make things happen and as such it is supposed to be a process to which all contribute and in which everyone in an organization ought to be involved (Department of Education 1996: 9). In support of this view Mungunda (2003: 47) claimed that much of the current second wave of educational reform has been couched in the language of teacher participation and empowerment.

In a school everything is driven by the values and mission of that particular school and these are developed and owned by more than just the principal or some outside authority. A culture of teaching and learning thrives well in a school where stakeholders feel ownership of the school's mission and ethos (Department of Education 1996:12). Ndhlovu, Bertram, Mthiyane and Avey (1999:24) pointed out that various kinds of societal changes are making it necessary to change the way we run organizations such as schools. Mclagan and Nel suggested that a move from hierarchical and authoritarian structures towards flatter and more participative organizational styles is a key to change. They argued that the present organizations need to be more flexible so that they can be able to respond to the rapid change that has become the norm in contemporary South African society and the world (*Ibid.*).

Ndhlovu *et al.* (1999:25) pointed to the irrelevance of bureaucratic organizations in today's fluid environment and further advised that bureaucratic organizations should restructure in order to be able to play a meaningful role in a changing society. The world no longer needs the machine like organizations that bureaucracy produces. Ndhlovu *et al.* (1999:27) argued that "...the challenge of our times calls for lively intelligent organizations that are responsive to the needs of their members and that are open to changes from the external environment." In his opposition to bureaucratic practices Ndhlovu *et al.* (1999:28) stated that bureaucracy was efficient for certain kinds of repetitive tasks that characterized the early Industrial Revolution. It no longer works well now because its rules and procedures are often diametrically opposed to the principles needed for members to take the next step towards greater organizational intelligence.

The notion of increased 'organizational intelligence' suggests a response to the changing nature of work which demands that organizations should move away from meaningless repetitive tasks to innovation and caring; they should abandon individual work in favour of teamwork; they should move away from the power of bosses to the power of customers, they should leave the practice of co-ordination from above and adopt the principle of co-ordination among peers.

Increased participation has been the central goal of management in organizations for decades. Weisbord (1987:18) claimed that the idea of participative management evolved during World War II from a collaboration between Kurt Lewin and an anthropologist, Margaret Mead who wanted to reduce civilian consumption of rationed foods. Lewin set up two groups of women, one being the experimental and the other being the comparative group. The housewives in the experimental group were lectured by an expert nutritionist on what they should do to reduce food consumption whilst the other group was given the facts and thereafter left to discuss together what to do. The group that reached consensus through discussion changed its food habits much more than those that were told what to do by an expert. From this experiment a conclusion was drawn that "people will commit to plans they have helped to develop and that you cannot do things to people but only with them" (Weisbord 1987:22).

Manser in his unpublished MEd dissertation (1999:18) found support for Weisbord's view when he stated that in order to achieve constructive change and development, schools would need to create a management culture in which individuals feel that they are able to participate in decision making without fear or prejudice. In this regard Ndhlovu *et al.* (1999:19) pointed out that any organization that wants to move to participation must redesign itself in order to become participative and reap all the benefits of a higher involvement style of operation. Whitaker (1995:42) claimed that in the new management paradigm the key question becomes: how can we help people to be as effective as they are capable of being and to be as successful as they want to be?

In the context of South African schools the idea of participative management seems to be taking a very long time to be realized. Perhaps this could be attributed to the fact

that the legacy of apartheid in the field of education has left the country with a system that is characterized by a culture of resistance to changing the way things have been done in the past (Department of Education 1996: 10). Ndhlovu *et al.* (1999:19) pointed out that the way in which schools are organized sometimes also impedes the schools' ability to change. South African schools have been hierarchical and authoritarian with very little power given to ordinary teachers and stakeholders.

Prior to 1994 schools in South Africa operated more as closed systems than as open social systems (Ndlazi 1999:6). Schools operated in isolation from the broader external environment in which they were situated and there was no link between what was taught inside the school and the world of reality outside the school. These schools' cultures were rigid and not responsive to changes in the external environment. There was virtually no motivation for school members to be creative and to take initiative for fear that they might make mistakes and end up losing their jobs. Consequently there were always tensions and feelings of mistrust and suspicion between schools and surrounding communities. This state of affairs often manifested itself in the lack of parental support for schools as well as students' uprising against school authorities (McKay 1995:300). Bush (2003:42) highlighted this point by stating that the increasing environmental turbulence and external challenges to educational organizations showed that the closed systems approach was inadequate for understanding or dealing with the most pressing problems of school administrators. There was an acute need to revisualize schools and create new pictures that would show the desirable interplay among people. Ndhlovu *et al.* (1999:19) put it clearly when he stated that the old style, authoritarian structures were barriers to the evolution and development of participative governance.

When the government of National Unity came into power in 1994 the new Department of Education was faced with the mammoth task of transforming many of the policies in respect of community and stakeholders' involvement in the control of schools (David 1998:35). The focus of the new Education Department was to transform the manner in which schools had been managed before. The goal was to transfer the control and management of schools to communities and stakeholders. In his address to the National Assembly in May 1996 the then minister of Education, Professor Sibusiso Bengu stated:

The primary aim of this development is to enable members of the community to have a greater say in the education of their children... and community involvement can only reach its full potential if there is effective communication between the school and the community in its surrounding (Daily Dispatch: 27 May 1996).

Since 1994 the Department of Education radically shifted the direction and vision of the education system with a series of policy initiatives and new legislations (Department of Education 1996:10). The South African Schools Act stipulated that the democratization of education would require that there be partnerships between the state, educators, parents, learners and other members of the community in the vicinity of the school (Madaza 2002:3). The South African Schools Act put particular emphasis on the participation of stakeholders in the governance and management of schools. Mungunda (2003:2) claimed that the belief is, that the involvement of the community and stakeholders would facilitate the smooth running of schools and would also contribute to improvement in academic achievement within schools.

Provision was made for community and stakeholders' involvement in decision making at schools through the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and in these SGBs parents are required by law to have more representation than other groups. This dominant representation of parents in SGBs is a deliberate effort by the Department of Education (DoE) to make communities have a greater say in school matters so that members of the public could feel the ownership of the schools. McKay (1995:309) claimed that the establishment of these SGBs opened up very important opportunities for the communities and stakeholders to influence Education policies at school level. However, Gorton (1996:119) asserted that the whole issue of community and stakeholders' involvement in schools is fraught with tensions and conflicts that emanate from the fact that different role players attach different interpretations and meanings to the idea of participative management.

Some schools in the Eastern Cape are currently experiencing problems of power struggles between teachers on the one side and community and stakeholders on the other. Each group of role players accuses the other of overstepping its boundaries and interfering in the domain of the other. This power struggle is indicative of the

obstacles that need to be overcome before participative management can be effective and successful in our schools and this calls upon researchers to investigate appropriate ways and means of implementing participative management so that it does not lead to unnecessary tensions on the part of those involved. A place to start would be to explore different stake-holders' perceptions of what participative management of schools entails.

1.4 GOALS OF THIS RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to:

- (a) Look closely into a number of interrelated and interconnected factors with a view to exploring the respondents' perceptions and experiences of participative management.
- (b) Identify current trends in participative management with a view to ascertaining what the various stakeholders believe to be obstacles faced at present and the measures most likely to overcome these hurdles.
- (c) Investigate current practices at schools with the intention of finding out how school managers employ democratic management processes such as participative decision making and teamwork.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This research is structured and organized systematically as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the study by explaining what it is that has triggered my interest to examine the phenomenon of participative management. The key questions which I address in this study are also highlighted. The rationale behind my undertaking this research work is explained in this chapter. Chapter 2 seeks to review existing literature on participative management with a view to finding out what the key lines of debate are. It is in this chapter that I have attempted to find a place to locate my study within the broad field of management. The views and perspectives of various theories of management are explored in this chapter.

Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures that were employed in collecting, analyzing and processing data in this study. This chapter also seeks to justify why certain research methods were preferred to others in conducting this research study and what benefits and advantages were derived from the use of such specific research techniques. Methods of data analysis such as editing and coding come to the fore in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is about the presentation of the collected data. Data acquired through each of the research procedures is presented.

Chapter 5 discusses the overall research findings and the implications of these findings for the education system in South Africa.

Chapter 6 contains a summary, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

1.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have touched on a number of issues by way of trying to introduce this research study. For example I have highlighted the background to the study and also explained how I have developed the interest to investigate the phenomenon of participative management. I have also thrown light on problems that are encountered by some schools in their attempt to grapple with the issue of stakeholders and community involvement in school matters. The manner in which the thesis is structured and organized has also been explained. The next chapter attempts to review existing literature on participative management.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BASIS OF PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As pointed out in the previous chapter the purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions and experiences of the various stakeholders with regards to participative management. In my statement of the problem I pointed out how different interpretations of the concept participative management have led to misunderstanding and tensions among various stakeholders in schools in the Eastern Cape. In this chapter I look at the existing literature on participative management with the intention of identifying major theorists in this field and also how various theories address the issue of participative management. By reviewing literature I would in the process be attempting to find a place in which to locate my research study within the broad field management. The chapter will also cover some aspects on the development of management thought in order to show how the science of management has evolved over the years to be what it is today.

2.2 DEFINING AN ORGANISATION

Management does not take place in a vacuum. It occurs in the context of an organization. What then is an organization? The word “organized” is used in a number of different ways by different people. Someone might say, “Please organize the catering for the meeting on Thursday”. Sometimes the word could be used as a compliment e.g. “Thandi is such an organized person.” A soccer commentator might say about Bafana Bafana: “That is the most organized performance I have seen from our team in recent months.” What one would notice is that in all the above examples the word “organized” is used to describe “favourable characteristics” as opposed to being “disorganized.”

The word is also used to describe an achievement, whether it be Thandi's successful life or good play by Bafana Bafana as in the above cases. The word also suggests an ability to plan and carry out these plans successfully so that the goal or vision - be it a good life or a good soccer performance - is achieved. Ndhlovu *et al.* (1999:15) claimed that a big part of an organized performance is the ability to get things or people to work together. For instance, it is unlikely that Bafana Bafana could be described as "organized" if the team did not work together. The term "organization" has in itself a collaborative connotation that suggests participative involvement of a group of people in whatever they have together planned to do. Any group of people that works together in a planned and coordinated way to achieve some common purpose could be described as an organization.

Understanding organizations enables us to begin to see how people work together within organizations (Moloi 2002:18). Moloi (2002:18) defined an organization as follows:

An organization is a consciously coordinated social entity with a relatively identifiable boundary that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set goals.

Let me unravel this lengthy definition. Firstly the phrase "consciously coordinated" implies that an organization is managed and controlled, and secondly the phrase "social entity" suggests that an organization is made up of people or groups of people who interact with each other. Organizations are people not things. The organization is the people who occupy the institution. These people have come together on the basis of declared, common interest and purposes which they find reasonably compatible and that can be achieved more efficiently and effectively by the concerted and co-ordinated actions of a group of people working together

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Participation, like democracy is a political principle; it is a principle easy to state but extra-ordinarily difficult to respect in action (Sarason 1995: 18). In an organization the top management might say that they value freedom of speech when

in reality they stifle the expression of any oppositional thought. Sarason (1995:19) claimed that the political principle justifying stakeholders' involvement is that when decisions are made affecting you or your possessions, you should have a role and a voice in the process of decision-making.

Mungunda (2003:22) pointed out that participative management is a concept surrounded by confusion, despite much thought and activity. Mclagan and Nel in Gultig (1999:5) shared the same sentiment when they argued that despite the growth of participation and empowerment ideals, a participative perspective has often proved to be difficult to implement successfully. Mungunda (2003:23) aligned himself with these views when he stated that the effectiveness of the use of a participative approach to management has not matched its popularity. Mungunda argued further that the problem arises as a result of the wider meaning attached to participation in which it tends to cover almost any given situation, even if minimal interaction has taken place.

The significant tenet of a participative approach is that all those groups and individuals who are to be directly affected by the outcome of a change process and also those who are to be involved in the implementation of any decisions should actively participate in that process from the beginning (Smith 2003: 23). The rule of thumb in a participative approach includes the notion that decisions should be made by those who are closest to the problem because they are the experts in their own situation. This simply means that those who are inside the organization know and understand their issues best and as a result no outside authority would have any justification for imposing his views or decisions on the organization members. In the true sense of the word participation should not be something that is restricted to members of top management only, but rather it should extend broadly throughout the organization to include every member.

Research on group dynamics that began in the 1940s and continued throughout the 1950s demonstrated that participation has the ability to energize greater performance, to produce better solutions to problems and it also enhances acceptance of decisions. Participation has the effect of overcoming resistance to change and it also increases commitment to the achievement of organizational goals. It has the positive impact of reducing stress levels on the part of management and it makes members feel better

and happier about themselves and their organization (Weisbord 1987:260). French and Bell (1995:19) claimed that participation is a powerful elixir; it is good for people and it improves individual and organizational performance. Lewin in Weisbord (1987:262) said the following about participation: “We are likely to modify our behaviour when we participate in problem analysis and solution and we are likely to carry out decisions we have helped make.” The kind of participation Lewin is talking about here is participation in all aspects of the process, that is, from the conceptualization of the issues to being part of planning, implementation and review. However, Lewin warned that involving people is not a recipe but rather it is a principle or value that must be applied uniquely in each situation.

Participation leads to empowerment. The more people that are given a chance to participate in the activities of an organization, the more they become empowered and their capacity to perform better increases. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:28) claimed that empowerment is about sharing control and responsibility. Davidoff and Lazarus stated that empowerment is also about providing structures and relationships where people are not merely carrying out responsibilities but are also exercising real control over the situation within which they are carrying out such responsibilities (*Ibid.*). Smith (2003:19) said the following about empowerment: “The concept of empowerment is often used to say that someone or a group that has power gives it to or shares it with those who have less or no power.” To empower is to give someone power. Empowerment is done by giving individuals the authority to participate, to make decisions, to contribute their ideas and to exert influence.

For participation and empowerment processes to be achieved, it is essential that top management in organization should create conditions conducive enough for members to realize their intrinsic potential and capabilities. Davidoff and Lazarus in (2002:30) claimed that there are two dimensions to the empowerment process namely subjective and objective empowerment. Subjective empowerment is about personal power where people believe that they can make a difference in a situation, where they feel confident and assertive and able to participate. Objective empowerment involves the taking of power, building structures where people can participate and involve themselves in decision – making processes. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:30) pointed out that empowerment is important simply because it is a basic human need to feel a

sense of control over one's life. Without this assurance people tend to feel disconnected, undervalued and ultimately not engaged in their work. Davidoff and Lazarus put it correctly as follows: "It is very difficult to put your heart fully into something over which you have no control" (*Ibid.*).

The benefits derived from empowerment are that empowered members have a greater degree of self-knowledge, they understand themselves, they know their own strengths and limitations and they are always willing and able to work towards their own process of transformation. An empowered person recognizes the fact that he cannot do everything on his own and he acknowledges the fact that far more is achieved by working collaboratively with others. The principle of synergy – of understanding and building on the collective energies of all role players to create something far more than individual efforts could achieve is central to the empowerment process and to the participative approach itself.

Smith (2003:24) claimed that participation enhances empowerment and empowerment in turn enhances performance and individual well being. When people in any context participate in shaping the life and direction of their situation, their capacity is enhanced. Participation therefore leads to capacity building. The more people participate the more meaningfully they will be able to contribute to the success of an organization.

Participation is not only about delegating certain jobs as decided by management, but decision-making is central to participation. Who makes decisions about what and for whom is a question that needs to be addressed when we talk about participation. Respect for one another, openness, showing interest in others, transparency and accountability all form part of the participative process.

Schmuck and Runkel (1994:58) claimed that one of the key ingredients of participation is vision. Developing a clear vision, devising a strategy to achieve the vision and unleashing the intelligence and energy of the work forces to accomplish the vision all require a collaborative and integrative approach.

2.4 WHY A PARTICIPATIVE APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT?

A participative approach to management is recommended by most management theorists today for a number of different reasons. Everard and Morris (1996:26) stated that involvement produces the commitment to goals on which a sense of achievement depends. They argued further that by involving the people we show them recognition and in the process we increase their sense of responsibility. The interest in their job increases as we provide them with both a learning opportunity and experience which may be of use in seeking advancement (Everard and Morris 1996:27). Lewin in Weisbord (1987:97) claimed that democratic management leads to higher achievement and better relationships than the authoritarian behaviour and that talking over important decisions in groups before implementation leads to higher commitment to change. Lewin claimed further that participation unleashes knowledge and skills of people who are doing the actual work of the organization. With a participative approach, managers are able to tap the unique potential and talents of each of the members and this also creates a collaborative learning experience.

Participation produces a team approach to problem solving that is based on the idea that the intelligence of a group exceeds the intelligence of the individual. Ndhlovu (1999:18) claimed that in an organization - be it a school or a business enterprise - individual members contribute their skills and intellectual resources to achieve the goals of the institution and that alone is a sufficient justification for members' participation in the decision making about the operation of the institution. A democratic manager considers his subordinates to be trustworthy and having the potential for growth and to this end he creates an atmosphere conducive for members to realize their innate capacity for growth and creativity. People are the most important assets and as a result it becomes essential that the manager shares his powers with them by way of involving them in the planning, implementation and review of organizational activities.

2.5 TEAMWORK: The core principle of participative management

A fundamental belief of a participative style of management is that the development of a team spirit is the key to any successful and effective organization. Earlier on I stated that the act of empowering individuals greatly increases their performance and

satisfaction. The message I am now conveying is that if you put together those empowered individuals to become a team, the performance and outcome would be extra-ordinary.

It goes without saying that some tasks in an organization are too complex and complicated for individuals alone to cope with and such tasks require collective effort to be accomplished. In a school, learning and teaching cannot be made an individual affair – it is a group phenomenon which needs teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders to put together their energies in order to achieve the goal of academic excellence. Smith (2003:20) supported this view when he stated that people working together can achieve more than a group of individuals working alone.

The word “team” does not apply to any group of people that exists. For example a group of people that meets accidentally at the bus stop cannot be said to constitute a team. A team is a group of individuals that has a common goal to achieve. One of the reasons a team is established is because it enables people to achieve objectives which otherwise they would not be able to realize on their own. One other characteristic a team displays is interaction. Working together entails that there be regular interaction among the members of the team so as to sort out any misunderstanding that might arise in the process of working together.

Teamwork in an organization creates synergy because the sum of the effort of team members is far greater than the sum of individual efforts of people working alone. In a team situation each member contributes to the success of others and this collaboration of different members to bring about an integrated achievement is the secret that lies behind the success and effectiveness of high performing organizations. Perhaps to have a clear understanding of synergy one would have to picture in his mind a big river which is fed with water by different tributaries. Each tributary contributes in its own little way but the result of all these small contributions is a massive current of water that sweeps all obstacles in its way. This is the situation that prevails in an organization where there is high involvement of members and where members are committed to the idea of working together to achieve organizational goals.

Smith (2003:97) argued that “Organization change will be effective, successful and satisfying and even inspiring when the force of synergy and collaboration are harnessed.”

French and Bell (1995: 98) mentioned Larson and Lafasto who studied a number of high performance teams which included football national champions, heart transplant surgical teams and others with a view to finding out why some teams are more successful than others. They found out that the following are some of the features that characterize successful teams: (a) a clear goal (b) unified commitment (c) principled leadership (French and Bell 1995:100). Weisbord (1987:299) claimed that a team can be said to be successful if (a) the team is able to resolve important dilemmas, often on which little progress has been made before; (b) if members emerge from the team more confident about their ability to influence the future and (c) if members in the team learn the willingness to take responsibility for themselves and to co-operate with others.

French and Bell (1995:110) claimed that there are three questions each member continually struggles with in a team situation. The three questions are:

(a) Am I in or out? It is a known fact that naturally human beings want to be seen to be part of what happens in their organization and also to be valued by others. The more a person feels in, the more he will co-operate and the more he feels out the more he will resist and sabotage the decisions of the organization (French and Bell 1995: 111). This implies that involving other members in decision making reduces opposition and resistance to implementation of such decisions, whereas exclusion results in members’ apathy and non-co-operation with management.

Another question a person struggles with is (b) Do I have any power or control? People always want to be able to influence their circumstances. Once people are faced with changes which they cannot influence as the case might be in an authoritarian management, they feel demoralized and lose their self – esteem. It is only by involving them that they can develop the capacity to control the situation in which they operate.

The third question is (c) Are my skills and expertise valued? Members in an organization want to be recognized and appreciated for having wonderful skills, knowledge and experience. They need to be applauded for the sense of achievement that follows upon the use of these skills. Such a situation can only occur in an organization where there is co-operation and mutual trust among members.

Weisbord (1987:23) pointed out that openness and giving and receiving feedback are necessary condition for the achievement of team spirit. Most important is that openness establishes trust which is a key ingredient of teamwork. Bruce and Sherman (1998:160) noted that without trust no team building or collaboration could be achieved.

2.6 READINESS: A pre-requisite for the effective implementation of a participative approach

Competence and ability in terms of knowledge and experience determine how far a person is able to participate in something (van der Mescht 2005). Structures and processes to facilitate participation can be put in place, but if members themselves are not ready and prepared to engage in participation such efforts will bear no fruits.

According to Weisbord (1987:60) readiness has to do with being well motivated enough to do something and in the context of an organization, readiness could mean the willingness or desire to participate in the organization's change process. Readiness is not something that can be imposed or forced upon individuals. It is an internal feeling or a belief that emanates from inside an individual to say, "Yes, we together can make a difference in this organization". Readiness also has to do with having the confidence in oneself to be part of the change process that occurs in his organization. As already stated earlier granting the right to individuals to participate in something ought to take into account the ability and level of maturity of the member concerned. There is nothing more frustrating and disappointing than involving a member in an activity for which he has very little knowledge or nothing to contribute. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:57) explained it as follows: "People are likely to take a step that is reasonable distance beyond where they are now, but they will give up in hopelessness if the step stretches them too far."

There could be various reasons why organization members are not willing or ready to participate in the change process of their organization. It could be that they have experienced disappointments with previous changes or perhaps some members have a vested interest in things remaining as they are. The lack of readiness to engage in participation could also be attributed to the fact that in South Africa people inherited a legacy of prescriptive management practices where subordinates were always expected to obey directives from those above them in the hierarchy. This has resulted in subordinates being unable to take initiatives or express their opinions openly for fear that they might offend their bosses.

2.7 PERSPECTIVES OF MANAGEMENT

Management is itself not a new concept. The Greeks and Romans, for instance, in the period before Christ, all managed their trading enterprises and military expeditions with skill. But the professionalization of management only emerged after the Industrial Revolution which came with the use of machinery. There was massive production which forced the industrialists to develop new management techniques of coordinating people and material. It was out of that milieu that new approaches to management emerged. Such approaches included Henry Taylor's Scientific Management Approach and the Human Relations approach.

Currently a participative style of management is recommended but it is essential for one to know how management thought has evolved over the years in order to see how we have arrived where we are today.

2.7.1 THE CLASSICAL VIEW OF MANAGEMENT: The machine metaphor

After the Industrial Revolution, organizations were managed according to Taylor's scientific approach. Taylor's view on management was that for effective management to occur people should be programmed to operate and be as efficient as machines. Taylor stressed that people would need to be constantly directed. Managers of this

period would have subscribed to McGregor's Theory X that people are inherently lazy and must be forced to work, strictly controlled and threatened with punishment in order to persuade them to pursue organizational goals.

Taylor's scientific approach emphasized that each person in the organization should have a clearly defined task and that the task should be large enough to occupy a person's maximum working abilities for each day of his/her employment. Failure to complete the task successfully should go along with punishment such as loss of pay whilst successful completion of task should be accompanied with an increase in remuneration. As the organization becomes more sophisticated the task should be made so complex and difficult so that only first-rate persons could accomplish it (Bush and West – Burnham 2003: 226).

The focus of this approach was more on production than on allowing participation of all members in the activities of the organization. There was no consideration for the dignity and well-being of the people who were responsible for making that production. McKay (1995:290) claimed that management believed that it could treat people like children by providing low-level need satisfaction, rewards if work was well done and withholding these benefits if it was done poorly. McKay argued that this carrot and stick theory may be useful in persuading a donkey to pull a cart but it seldom works effectively in motivating human beings.

Taylor's approach had enormous benefits in boosting productivity and creating massive wealth for stockholders, but the steep pyramidal structure which is a characteristic feature of this approach would create major problems for today's organizations. Firstly information moves too slowly within the various levels of the hierarchy and this results in members not being well informed about the operation of the organization. The management structure lacks the flexibility needed to compete in a rapidly changing environment. Decisions are made unilaterally by those at the top of the hierarchy and then orders are passed down the hierarchy to be carried out by those at the bottom without questioning. Surely a rigid approach like this one kills creativity and hinders initiative since members cannot use their own discretion. They have to wait for orders and instructions from the bosses above.

This stereotypical approach impedes the growth and development of members in the organization. Most importantly, this theory ignores forces that lie outside the organisation.

This approach attaches more importance to economic factors such as high pay for successful completion of work. What this approach overlooks is the fact that people may be willing to devote themselves to their work without necessarily being given economic incentives such as high salaries. This approach ignores, perhaps deliberately, the fact that there are non-economic incentives that play a role in motivating organization members to become productive. For instance in a school situation a teacher may be willing to take up a promotion post even if the post itself is not accompanied by the monetary rewards.

The teacher may be willing to carry out the responsibility as long as those in top management show appreciation and gratitude for the teacher's service. The principal's words of appreciation like: "You are doing a very good job, keep it up!" are a sufficient motivation for the teacher to feel that his services are valued and to feel that he is also part of the school's achievement. It ought to be known that people need kind, sympathetic and considerate management in order to be able to give out their best at work. The idea of giving members a chance to have a say in organizational matters and to be part of decision making processes can thus be more important in motivating the members than monetary rewards.

2.7.2 TOWARDS A "HUMANE" MANAGEMENT APPROACH

An early reaction to the mechanistic and impersonal perception of organizations as advocated by Taylor came from Mary Parker Follett (Bush 2003:90). Follett was among the first people to recognize the importance of human factors in the management of organizations. She wrote several brilliant papers dealing with the human side of management. Follett believed that it was necessary for organizations to develop and maintain harmonious human relations at all times.

But the major breakthrough for the Human Relations Approach to management occurred during a study experiment at the Hawthorne plant in Chicago (Hoy and

Miskel 2003:22). The Hawthorne study revealed that neither wage incentive alone nor change in physical working conditions could explain the amount of production in an organization. It was discovered that the development of social groups like friendship cliques are significant and also had an impact on the functioning of an organization. As a result of this experiment the existence and importance of informal group interactions within the formal organizational structure gained recognition (Hoy and Miskel 2003: 28).

The Human Relations Approach is credited with changing the organizational thought of managers. As a result of this approach, managers came to realize that they need to work with and through people to achieve organizational goals and that therefore sensitivity to the human factor should be the first step in their work as managers. The Human Relations Approach also brought to light the fact that economic incentives (monetary rewards) are not the only significant motivation but also non-economic social factors play a role in boosting the morale of members to commit themselves to organizational goals. For example the teacher who is appointed Head of Department may be willing to devote his or her time and energy to the development of their department even if such a post is not accompanied by financial rewards. The fact that the principal had shown confidence in the teacher to appoint him to the position is a sufficient incentive for him or her to do their job.

The Human Relations Approach made managers aware of workers as human beings and not just as cogs in a moving machine. What I have discovered about this approach is that it is inclined towards McGregor's theory Y (Weisbord 1987:114) which is known for having an optimistic view of human kind in the sense that it considers people to be trustworthy, creative and co-operative and so therefore they deserve to be granted an opportunity to participate in the activities of their organization and to interact with others. The idea of taking into account the members well being and involving the members in the operation of an organization came about as a result of the impact of the Human Relations Approach on management thought.

2.7.3 PARADIGM SHIFT IN MANAGEMENT THOUGHT

The theories of management mentioned above address the task-person tension issue in that one theory puts emphasis on the task to be done whilst another theory focuses on consideration for people in the organization. However, contemporary management theories that emerged after these two earlier theories take the issue of organizational management further by pointing to aspects of management that had never been thought of before. These contemporary theories have moved away from the dichotomy of task-person issue in order to address hidden complexities of organizational life. These theories claim that organizations are more than just task and person. These contemporary theories examine current issues in organizations such as how an organization relates to forces in its external environment, how the culture of an organization impacts on its operation and also the issue of learning organizations. Contemporary perspectives on management seek to unravel and bring to the fore the hidden complexities of organizational life as already pointed out above.

2.7.3.1 VIEWING ORGANIZATIONS AS SYSTEMS: The systems approach to management

The basic idea of a systems approach to management is that organizations like schools cannot afford to operate to the exclusion of the environment in which they are situated. In order to have a clear understanding of how a systems approach works one would have to know what a system is. A system is defined in a number of different ways by different people.

French and Bell (1995:67) defined a system as a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes. French and Bell (1995:68) also referred to a system as a set of elements standing in interaction. French and Bell (1995:72) referred to Kast and Rosezweieg who defined a system as an organized unitary whole composed of two or more interdependent parts and that it is delineated by identifiable boundaries from its environmental supra- system. Burke (1987:360) put it simply when he said that a system is an arrangement of interrelated parts.

What one can deduce from all of the above definitions is that a system denotes interdependence, interconnectedness and interrelatedness of a set of elements that constitute an identifiable whole.

A systems approach sees members in an organization depending on one another for success, each member contributing to the overall vision of the organization and in a situation of this kind no member can afford to work in isolation from the rest of other members. This is collective participation. Failure of one member will affect the overall performance of other members since each member is related in some ways to other members in the organization (French and Bell 1995:76).

Systems theory is an idea borrowed from biology and in terms of this idea members in an organization are regarded as being like the different parts of the body where each part is indispensable and contributes in its own unique way to the overall normal functioning of the body. In the human body if one part becomes injured and consequently fails to perform its function well, the rest of the other parts of the body would be affected by the injury and would also feel the pain. This suggests a kind of participation in which members depend on one another for their success as a group.

In terms of systems theory, organizations are viewed as open systems where there is active interaction and exchange of information and material between the organization and its external environment. French and Bell (1995:90) described the characteristic features of open systems as follows: “All open systems are input – throughput – output mechanisms.” What this means is that organizations draw input from the environment in the form of people, energy, money, raw material etc. They then transform these inputs in the throughput processes and thereafter export finished products to the environment in the form of output. This applies with relevance to a school system. A school draws learners from the surrounding communities (i.e. input) and it transforms these learners into skilled people by empowering them with knowledge (i.e. throughput) and these skilled learners are sent out to serve the communities (i.e. output) (French and Bell 1995:90). This means an organization like a school can never afford to operate as a closed system because a school is by its nature a social system in which there should be interaction between those people inside the school and those outside.

French and Bell (1995:92) stated that any organization that is insensitive and too rigid to adapt to changes in its external environment is likely to stagnate and die. In similar vein van der Westhuizen (1991:83) claimed that a fully closed system would obtain no human or material resources for its production system nor would it be able to distribute a finished product to the environment and therefore could not exist. I have said earlier on that a school is by its nature a social system in the sense that schools exist within particular community contexts and these contexts are part of what shapes the school and gives it its identity. According to Davidoff and Lazarus (2002: 4):

Whether a school exists in the midst of an informal settlement, a working class area, a rural or urban area, an area controlled by gangs or in an affluent middle class area, that environment has an impact on the life of that school.

What is emphasized here is the fact that factors in the external environment affect the internal structures and processes of organizations and in the case of a school the external environment comprises stakeholders, the Department of Education, individual parents, teacher unions, accrediting agencies and any other group of persons involved in educational policies and practices.

Van der Westhuizen (1991:84) claimed that the openness or closed-ness of organizations is determined largely by the degree of interaction which occurs with the external environment with respect to specific decisions or pressures. However van der Westhuizen (1991:85) also acknowledged the fact that it is very unlikely that an organization can be completely open in the absolute sense of the word. A school may for example be quite open to advice by parents on matters pertaining to proper procedures of disciplining learners, but it may be closed to advice by the same parents on matters of the professional development of staff. Van der Westhuizen (1991:88) stated that it is for this reason that one would find that across the entire decision – making spectrum of the school there are differing degrees of participation by stakeholders. However, in a comparative sense certain schools tend to lean towards one side of the other of the open – closed continuum (van der Westhuizen 1991:90). Van der Westhuizen (1991:110) stated that feedback is necessary in order to ensure that the organization remains on track with the needs and demands of the external

environment. Feedback is information from the external environment about the organization's performance and it gives an indication of whether or not the people outside the organization are satisfied with the output of the system. But then the question that we need to ask ourselves with regard to education is: How can a school ensure that its curriculum and its way of doing things are still relevant to the needs of the community it serves? The answer seems to be that the principal should at all times make sure that members of the community are actively involved in the operation of the school and he should create an atmosphere that encourages members to express their views freely and openly. In that way the principal would be able to gauge the feeling of the people and other stakeholders about the school's performance and that would give him an indication of whether or not he needs to adjust his management style.

What the systems approach brings to the fore is the fact that multiple environmental influences that come from different levels of society affect what happens in organizations like schools. Technological developments, political structures and patterns of legal norms, social conditions and cultural values, economic and market factors all converge to influence the organization's operations and processes (Dekker and Lemmer 1993:280).

2.7.3.2 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND GROUP PARTICIPATION

The idea of viewing organizations as cultures where there is a system of shared meaning among members is a relatively recent phenomenon because twenty years ago organizations were for the most part seen as rational systems which coordinate and control the workforce.

The shift in management thought began to put the individual and all his complexity at the centre stage of organizational and management enquiry. To this end new concepts like culture have started to emerge to examine the invisible forces underlying the complex nature of human interactions (Mungunda 2003:11). Different writers provide different definitions of organizational culture.

Deal and Peterson (1999:2) defined organizational culture as the shared beliefs and values that closely knit a community together. Schein (1992:88) provided a widely recognized definition of organizational culture by stating:

It is a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems...that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.

McKay (1995:110) claimed that in the context of schools cultures are complex webs of traditions and rituals that have been built up over time as teachers, students, parents, stakeholders and managers work together to deal with crises and accomplishments.

Hoy and Miskel (2003:213) claimed that an organization's culture consists largely of what people believe about what works and what does not and it also includes the manner in which participants in an organization approach decisions and problems. What one could infer from all the above definitions is that culture is not an individual affair but rather it is a group phenomenon in which all members in an organization participate or share as a collective. Culture permeates every activity in an organization starting from way members as a group do things to the manner in which members relate to one another.

A saying that is often heard in South Africa today is that schools need to promote a culture of teaching and learning. A culture of teaching and learning would be one in which all role players value the process of learning and teaching and also in which there is collaboration amongst all the members in the school (Davidoff and Lazarus 2002:51). The degree to which participation or a participative approach can be made to work in an organization is contingent upon the type of culture that prevails within an organization. For instance in entropic organizations where there is a toxic culture that promotes mediocrity, inertia and apathy, participative management becomes difficult to implement whereas a collaborative culture promotes interaction, participation, trust and mutual understanding among members. In school cultures valuing collegiality and collaboration there is a better climate for the social and

professional exchange of ideas and fostering of effective communication among members. In such a synergetic culture there is an atmosphere of vitality and interest with a great deal of open listening and talking, lively debates and discussions (Whitaker 1995:50).

I have explained earlier on that organization culture comprises those basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization and this suggests an overtone of collective participation. These beliefs and assumptions are learned responses to the group's problems and they are taken for granted because they have solved the group's problems repeatedly and reliably. As a result these assumptions and beliefs are regarded as so obviously correct that they are rarely examined or questioned (French and Bell 1995:119).

Behaviors of members are rooted in these socio-cultural norms and values and it is the norms and beliefs that would have to be modified in order to make the group receptive to new changes. French and Bell (1995:120) claimed that since norms are beliefs held collectively by a group they can best be changed by focusing on the whole group and not on an individual. If one attempts to change the attitude or behaviour of an individual without changing the norms of the group to which one belongs, the chances are that the individual whose behaviour has been changed will be considered a threat by other group members and he will come under pressure from the group to return to the old behaviour or if not he will be entirely rejected by the group. What this suggests is that the major leverage for change process in an organization is at a group level and not at the level of an individual.

One of the common mistakes often committed by our Department of Education (DoE) in the Eastern Cape is that whenever they want to introduce changes in schools, they would take one or two teachers out of school for a weeklong workshop. The idea is that the few selected teachers would be able to disseminate information gathered at the workshop to other members of staff in their respective schools and in that way the required change would be brought about. But the irony of this practice is that the teachers who were work shopped and who are supposed to drive the change process tend to revert to their traditional ways of doing things once they are back in their schools.

The problem here lies in the fact that the DoE in attempting to introduce change deals with individuals instead of focusing on the entire group in the school. Change is a process that requires an active participation by all and not just involvement of the few.

Culture as a unifying force in an organization plays a number of important roles and functions (Bush and Bell 2002:27). Deal and Peterson (1999:7) claimed that in schools that embrace norms of performance, change and efficacy staff gladly experiment with new approaches and seek innovative practices to solve enduring problems together. Whitaker (1995:51) pointed out that synergetic organizational cultures result in enmeshed and connected styles of relationships. An enmeshed relationship is where members think and behave as one unit and a connected relationship is where there is also a high capacity for flexibility and adaptation to change (Whitaker 1995:52). Schools that have synergetic cultures do not isolate teachers but instead encourage professional dialogue.

2.7.3.3 LEARNING ORGANISATIONS: The ultimate goal of participative management

All the democratic approaches to management of schools and organizations such as participation are introduced so that schools could eventually become learning organizations. What then are learning organizations? Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:85) defined a learning organization as: “An organization which is constantly and systematically reflecting on its own practice and making appropriate adjustments and changes as a result of new insights gained through that reflection.” In other words learning organizations treat change as an ongoing feature of their identity and consequently they make change part of their organizational ethos.

There has been a misconception that all schools are learning organizations because they are all involved in the act of teaching and learning. The truth is that learning organizations are different from an ordinary school where learning is taken as “the usual business”. In an institution which is a learning organization members constantly reflect on their work and they discuss their work as a team rather than as isolated individuals. Members of a learning organization regard mistakes as opportunities for learning (Senge 2000:18).

What distinguishes the principal of learning schools from other principals is the fact that principals of learning schools go beyond merely involving teachers in decision – making; they encourage teachers to continuously engage in identifying best practices. The dominant thought in the mind of members of a learning organization is: “We work together on improving ourselves” (Senge 2000:19). Learning organizations are characterized by the fact that members at all levels are collectively and continually enhancing their capacity to create things they really want to create.

Organizations where members feel oppressed, having to conform to all kinds of rules, goals and objectives in whose formulation they did not participate cannot be called learning organizations. In organizations where members do not work together and where there is very little sense of collective learning going on, the idea of a learning organization is difficult to conceive. Senge (2000:24) claimed that schooling has traditionally been about memorizing a lot of information which people do not really care about and the whole approach was fragmented in the sense that knowledge was put in cubbyholes and not really integrated. That is not in line with the principle of learning organization. In a learning organization members do not work separately with each member doing his own thing in his own little corner but rather they share information and work collaboratively in an integrated manner. The manager’s role in a situation of this kind is not so much to control staff but instead to create a suitable environment in which members can continually learn and realize their untapped potential. The creation of a conducive environment becomes a collective effort of all members who work together to do things better and differently.

The good thing about learning organizations is that they are committed to lifelong learning and are open to new ideas. Members do not cover ignorance by resisting change and wanting to maintain the status quo. Sharing knowledge among members and continuous evaluation has become the accepted way of doing things in learning organizations. The organization becomes committed to a set of outcomes and it constantly assesses and reassesses its journey to this destination and mistakes made in this journey are treated as part of education.

With learning organizations problem solving by members is a never ending process and members continually ask themselves questions as to how they can get to the root of the problem and even when they find the root, they do not stop thinking. Members continuously reflect on the wisdom of their action and assess how it is impacting on the operation of the organization. For learning organizations it is not enough just to survive but members consistently strive together for improvement and excellence.

In learning organizations learning is driven by vision. The envisioning process is inclusive of members at all levels and it is ongoing in the sense that members keep on dreaming about positive things they would love to see in their organization in future. Senge (2000:28) pointed out that when a member joins an organization he brings along with him a high sense of purpose and the manager's responsibility is to bring out that personal purpose from the member by creating a reflective environment and a degree of safety where individuals can rediscover the best they can be. The manager's task would be to bring together the members in such a way that they can communicate their individual visions to one another and gradually begin to build a shared vision which is continually revisited.

Learning organizations are not about developing the skills of an individual to do his or her work better but rather they are about enhancing the collective capacity of members to create and pursue an overall vision. The focus here is not on an individual but rather on a group. Members work together to create an environment where they can continually reflect on what they are doing and learn more about what it takes to work as a team. A learning organization differs in many ways from the rest of other organizations in that a learning organization has learnt to learn about itself and about the world within which it exists and functions. Consequently members of a learning organization are always conscious of their strengths and weaknesses as a group. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:60) explained the never-ending learning of learning organizations as follows: "The more conscious we are, the more able we are to learn and the more we learn the more conscious we become of our ignorance."

Learning organizations are an ideal situation that can be achieved through the highest form of participation and there is no doubt that it will take decades for our schools in South Africa to attain this ideal picture. To be able to turn our schools into learning

organizations requires managers who can ride the waves of change and meet the challenges this need presents. To achieve the idea of learning organizations South Africa would need managers who can function as transitional leaders in the process of organizational and environmental adaptation to change.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented an overview of management theories as they relate to the concept of participative management. I have shown that despite the fact that the word “participation “ has been with mankind for a long time the idea of participation is still surrounded by a lot of confusion. I have alluded to the fact that the wider meaning attached to the concept makes it extremely difficult to know precisely what it means hence different organizations have different ways of implementing the idea. I have indicated that participation is a political principle that is based on the idea that a person should be involved in the formulation of any decision that is likely to affect him. However, I have also pointed out that the nature and extent of members’ involvement will differ from organization to organization. The benefits to be derived from applying a participative approach were also pointed out and it was made clear that the benefits far outweigh the risks and problems. The next chapter discusses the methods and procedures that have been used to collect and analyze data.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures that were used in collecting and analyzing data in this research study. The chapter seeks to justify why I have chosen to utilize certain research techniques instead of others and it also explains how these techniques have assisted me to delve deeper into the phenomenon of participative management. I have followed a phenomenological approach in an interpretive paradigm, and employed the case study method and data collection techniques, namely questionnaires and interviews. In this chapter I also highlight matters of ethical concern and the limitations of the study. I also touch on the site of my research and how I went about selecting my participants for the study.

3.2 WHY AN INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM?

Mungunda (2003:31) claimed that a paradigm is a frame of reference or “mental map” through which we see the world. Researchers in their search for truth work from different beliefs about the nature of reality and how one sees the nature of reality is influenced by one’s frame of reference. Creswell (1994:4) claimed that to an interpretive researcher the only reality is that which is constructed by the individual involved in the research situation. Because my study seeks to understand and not prove anything it fits well within a paradigm that describes, interprets and explains how participants make sense of their situation. Creswell (1994:5) claimed that interpretive research provides fresh insights into apparently well known phenomena

In this research study I was interested in understanding the subjective experience and individual perceptions of stakeholders with regard to participative management and the meaning they attach to the idea itself. I wanted to find out how these stakeholders describe, interpret and make sense of participative management. The interpretive paradigm appeared to be an appropriate orientation to enable me to enter the “lived world” of the participants. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:19) claimed that

interpretivism believes that the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated. Interpretivist researchers have a belief that the understanding of individuals' interpretations of the world around them has to come from inside and not imposed from outside. Udjombala (2002:43) in support of the interpretive approach claimed that in order to understand and interpret social situations the researcher should interact with the people involved in such situations, to listen to them and try to make sense of their perceptions and experiences.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:22) pointed to the advantages of conducting research within interpretive paradigm as follows: “the central endeavor in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience”. To retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within. Other features that characterize an interpretive paradigm and which make interpretive paradigm a suitable tradition for social researchers includes the following:

- (a) Interpretive researchers begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretation of the world around them.
- (b) Theory is emergent and arise from a particular situation.
- (c) Theory does not precede research but instead follow it. In other words, theory emerges from data and the whole process is inductive in nature.
- (d) The outcomes of the research are negotiated and the constructs of the participants are used to structure the investigation.
- (e) Meanings are not imposed upon the data but rather data are allowed to speak for themselves and meaning is derived inductively from data.
- (f) Interpretive researchers work directly with experience and understanding to build their theory on them. The data collected is glossed with the meanings and purposes of those people who supplied it.

The above features make the interpretive paradigm appropriate for most forms of social research especially research studies that seek to explore people's perceptions and experiences of particular phenomena. The above characteristic features make an interpretive orientation relevant for my research work since I am here engaged in an

attempt to explore and discover stakeholders' understanding, interpretation and feelings about participative management.

3.4 THE CASE STUDY METHOD

This research work on stakeholders' experiences and perceptions about participative management is a case study of a High School in the Cala District. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:181) defined a case study as a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle. Adelman as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:182) defined a case study as "the study of an instance in action." Yin (2003:36) claimed that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context.

I have decided on making this research work a case study for a number of different reasons. Firstly it is out of convenience because a case study can be undertaken by a single researcher without needing a full research team. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:184) pointed out that the strength of a case study is that its results are more easily understood by a wide audience including non-academics as they are written in everyday language. Case studies are immediately intelligible, they speak for themselves. They are able to catch unique features which otherwise might be lost in large scale data such as surveys and these unique features might hold the key to understanding the situation.

Case studies also provide insights into other similar situations and in that way they assist in the interpretation of other similar cases. Cohen and Manion (1994:183) claimed that case studies frequently follow the interpretive tradition of research, which is that of seeing the situation through the eyes of participants. For instance case studies focus on individual actors or groups of actors and seek to understand their perceptions of events. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:184) recommended a case study method for the reason that case studies are strong on reality because they are down to earth and are usually in harmony with the reader's own experience. Bell (1993:11) added his voice by saying that the case study approach is an appropriate method for an individual researcher because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a

problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale. Anderson (1990:156) pointed to the advantage of using a case study method as follows:

Education is a process and there is a need for research methods which themselves are process – oriented, flexible and adaptable to changes in circumstances. The case study method is appropriate for such situations.

3.5 TRIANGULATING DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:112) defined triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection to study the same phenomenon. Put another way, triangulation is a multi-method approach to a problem and it involves the use of more than one method in the pursuit of a given objective. Mungunda (2003:37) in support of triangulation argued as follows: “Multiple sources of information are sought and used because it is unlikely that a single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive picture.”

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:112) added to the above view by stating that exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher’s picture of the particular slice of reality he is investigating. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:113) further claimed that a researcher needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artifacts of one specific method of data collection and such confidence can only be achieved when different methods of data collection are utilized. Nongubo (2004:22) claimed that triangulating data collection techniques is appropriate when a more holistic view of a situation is sought.

Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993:117) pointed out that the other advantage of triangulation is that it gives a more detailed and balanced picture of a situation. Altrichter *et al.* further claimed that with triangulation the contradictions which are often hidden in single data collection techniques become visible, thus enabling a more profound interpretation. I decided on combining two techniques of data collection namely questionnaires and interviews because I wanted that the strength of one data collection tool should complement the weakness of the other. My aim of triangulating

was also directed towards enriching the picture and thus providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of participative management.

3.6 SAMPLING

Sampling refers to the population of the study. Vockel (1993:113) defined the population as that larger community from which the sample is to be drawn. This research study is focused on the teachers and members of the School Governing Body of a High School in the Cala District of the Eastern Cape. I chose this particular High School for convenience reasons because of its proximity to where I stay and so I did not have to spend much on transport to reach the school. Over and above this I also have a long-standing friendship with the teaching staff and community of the school and that was a great advantage for me because that afforded me easy access and entry into the school.

The High School under study has a total number of sixteen teachers including the principal and I decided that each of the teachers should be given a chance to participate in the study by way of filling in a questionnaire. I selected for interviews the principal of the school, the chairperson of the SGB, one teacher who is a member of the School Management Team (SMT) and one elite drawn from the surrounding community. In this research study the elite happened to be a headman of the village after whom the school is named. Bell (1993:92) stated that elites are considered to be the influential, the prominent and well informed people in the community and are often selected for interviews on the basis of their knowledge and expertise in areas relevant to research. Bell (1993:93) claimed that valuable information could be gained from elites because of the position they hold in social realms. Elites are able to provide an overall view of the situation in which the researcher is interested.

3.7 UNDERTAKING A PILOT STUDY

The use of questionnaires as a data collection tool requires that a pilot study be undertaken in order to check on the suitability, accuracy, correctness and relevance of questions before embarking on the main study. To this end between 25 and 30 of July 2005 I conducted a pilot study by giving out the questionnaires to three educators who

happened to be language teachers in their respective schools. The three educators did not belong to the school under study.

Through the pilot study I was able to get feedback about the vagueness and ambiguity of questions which needed to be corrected and rephrased. The pilot study also gave me an idea about the kind of data I should expect from the main study. A pilot study is recommended by a number of researchers for a number of reasons. Bell (1993:37) stated that the purpose of a pilot study is “to achieve the degree of precision necessary to ensure that respondents understand exactly what you are asking, to check that your language is Jargon free.” Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993:100) claimed that a pilot study reduces the number of errors because unforeseen problems revealed during the pilot study could be overcome by perhaps redesigning the main study. Altrichter pointed out further that a pilot study provides data for the researcher to make a sound decision on the advisability of going ahead with the main study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:260) summed up the significance of doing a pilot study by stating the following:

Piloting the questionnaires serves several important functions such as checking the clarity of questions to eliminate difficulties to wording, checking whether the questionnaire is too long or too short, too threatening or too offensive.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

Powney and Watts (1994:22) claimed that the choice of the tools for data gathering depends on one’s research goals. They further stated that the most important thing is that the researcher should select research tools that would enable him to obtain the best information in order to answer his research questions. After much thought I came to a realization that since my main goal was to explore the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders about participative management, the use of questionnaires and interviews in data gathering would be the best option for me.

3.8.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

Walker (1985:120) defined a questionnaire as “a device which enables the respondent to answer questions.” Cunningham and Cordeiro (2000:116) claimed that the questionnaire may be considered as a formalized and stylized interview or interview by proxy. Cunningham and Cordeiro argued further that the form of a questionnaire is the same as it would be in a face to face interview, the only difference being that in a questionnaire the interviewer is removed.

I administered questionnaires consisting of closed and open-ended questions to the sixteen teachers of the High School under study in order to get their personal views on participative management. Through the use of questionnaires I was able to collect adequate data at a relatively low cost in terms of time and access to participants.

I was able to gather the required data without necessarily interfering with the privacy of the participants since the participants could work on the questionnaire at their own convenient time and in the comfort of their own homes. I gave the participants two weeks to complete the questionnaire (Appendix B). The questionnaires consisted of a series of questions, which were designed to extract data on respondents’ views about participative management. The questions were sufficiently simple and straightforward so that they could be easily understood by the respondents.

I avoided ambiguity, vagueness and double-barreled questions by first pre-testing the questionnaires in a pilot study as I have indicated earlier on. I numbered the questionnaires in order that it could be easy for me to make a follow up on the respondents and so that I could identify who has or has not yet returned the questionnaire. I had designed the content of the questionnaire in such a way that it reflected the objectives of the study. I gave myself sufficient time to examine the questionnaires vigorously during the pilot study and I discarded any question that did not relate specifically to participative management. I made attempts to avoid leading questions because according to Creswell (1994:92) leading questions have a tendency of introducing elements of bias in the responses of the subjects. Answers to such

questions cannot be said to be a true reflection of respondents' views and experiences about the phenomenon being investigated (Lunenburg and Ornstein 1991:86).

3.8.2 INTERVIEWS

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:268) defined an interview as a “two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives.” Walker (1985:90) claimed that the interview is based on the assumption that it takes two to tell the truth. Walker explained that in essence the interview relies on the fact that people are able to offer accounts of their behaviour, practice and actions to those who ask them questions.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:267) remarked that interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their point of view. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:268) claimed further that in these senses an interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life; it is part of life itself. Merriam (2001:72) pointed to the importance of interviews as follows:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe...We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meaning they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things.

Merriam (2001:73) put it as follows: “The purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter the other person's world and perspective.” Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993:101) aligned themselves with this view when they said that interviews gave access to other people's perceptions including the thoughts, attitudes and opinions that lie behind their behaviour.

In this study I conducted structured and unstructured interviews with a variety of stakeholders who are part of the High School under study from 12 September to 21 September 2005. Vockel (1993:118) claimed that one advantage of using unstructured

interviews is that it allows for a more flexible style adapted to the personality and circumstances of the person being interviewed. Vockel stated further that interviewing also offers an opportunity to probe for details and ask for clarity in cases where there is ambiguity in participants' responses. People that I interviewed included the principal of the school, the chairperson of SGB, one educator who is a member of the SMT and one elite drawn from the surrounding community. I made an appointment with each of the participants with respect to the date, time and venue of the interview for the convenience of both the respondents and myself.

I decided on making the interviews more of an informal conversation in order that the interviewee could feel free to express his views the way he wants without being intimidated by too much formality. Johnson as cited in Neshila (1994:44) claimed that the skills of questioning, listening and recording are central to obtaining data in interviewing. To this end I decided on recording all the interviews on tape after of course reaching an agreement with the respondents. Bell (1993:80) pointed "Tape recording allows for preservation and study of data from non-recurring events." Bell (1993:81) stated further that with tape recording interpretation of information can be validated by another researcher and data can be retaken and restudied whenever a need arises.

I designed an interview schedule (Appendix C) consisting mostly of open-ended questions. The interview questions were designed and steered around the following aspects of participative management:

- (a) The perceptions and experiences the interviewees have about participative management.
- (b) Ways and means of making participative management effective and successful in schools.
- (c) Possible threats to the implementation of participative management and how these could be overcome.

During the interviews I was at liberty to vary the sequence of questions, probe for detail and even to change the wording when a need arose. The wording of the question was tailored to suite each particular individual and the questions were asked in a sequence appropriate for the interviewee.

Cohen and Manion (1994:86) claimed that it is possible in an interview that different people may interpret a particular question differently and consequently they may give inaccurate responses. I attempted to avoid this by continually phrasing and rephrasing the questions during the interview in order to ensure that the questions had the same meaning for all the interviewees. The flexibility in the interview structure motivated the interviewees to answer the questions fairly accurately. I focused mostly on asking open-ended questions because according to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:280) such questions offer the interviewee the freedom to decide himself about the form and the length of his answers.

I approached the interview without any pre-determined answers which could have influenced me to persuade the interviewees to answer in a particular way. I put aside any theory or knowledge I have about participative management because I wanted to describe the phenomenon of participative management precisely as seen through the eyes of the participants. The idea was to allow the participants to describe their own world the way they perceive and experience it.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Marshall and Rossman (1995:11) defined data analysis as “the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data.” Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:295) claimed that analysis involves discovery and deriving patterns in the data, looking for categories and themes in the data and in short trying to sort out what the data are about. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:296) put it as follows: “when we talk about analysis we are referring to the ways in which the researcher moves from a description of what is the case to an explanation of why what is the case is the case.” Cohen and Manion (1994:181) claimed that raw data have no inherent meaning and that it is the interpretive act of the researcher that brings meaning to those data.

Huberman and Miles (1994:62) claimed that there is no one right way to analyse; one can be creative, can have fun or can combine techniques. Huberman and Miles stated that as long as the researcher is consistent, rigorous and honest it is okay. Huberman and Miles advised that it is a good analytical approach for a researcher to keep on

asking questions during analysis. Such questions would challenge the researcher's assumptions, assumptions contained in the literature review and even participants' assumptions. Huberman and Miles stated that by constantly questioning and cross questioning, the researcher would be able to discover rival interpretations and new insights.

In this research study I analyzed data using an inductive approach. Inductive analysis means that categories and patterns emerge from the data rather than being imposed on the data prior to data collection. After I had obtained the data my first task was now to reduce the mass of collected data to a form suitable for analysis. Data reduction usually consists of coding data in preparation for analysis. But prior to coding I had to check the questionnaires and this task of checking the questionnaires is what is known as editing. Mungunda (2003:38) pointed to three central tasks of editing namely, that editing is done to check the completeness, accuracy and relevance of data provided.

I made an effort to check if there was an answer to every question asked in the questionnaire. It often happens that a respondent may fail to answer a question asked in the questionnaire not because he does not have an answer but because of carelessness or oversight. During the process of checking I was at the same time trying to organize the collected data. The organization of data involved me reading through the data forces repeatedly in order to become familiar with those data in intimate ways and also in order to get sense of the whole of the material. As I was reading I was at the same time interpreting the data, deriving meanings and inferences from the words and acts of research participants.

Coding then followed. The purpose of coding was to summarize the data and classify the answers to individual questions into meaningful categories in order to bring out their essential pattern. A set of coding frames was abstracted for each question in the questionnaire. During coding I had to break down the data into units of meaning or topics which I then subsumed under a general heading to bring together diverse activities. My task here was to put some kind of order on the data without distortion. I had to note recurrent topics and themes in the interviews and then I put these together into clusters or groups of topics which I gain subsumed under one broad heading.

In some instances I had to do editing and coding simultaneously. During editing I had to determine whether the data were useful in illuminating the question being explored and whether or not they were central to the research topic. I had to discard any data that did not relate to the research topic. The use of codes and categories helped me not only to break the data into manageable pieces but it also enabled me to identify relationships between units of meanings. The data were entered into a computer software package suitable for analysis of qualitative data in order to be able to produce graphs and tables needed in data presentation.

3.10 ETHICAL ISSUES

Van Manen (1997:4) stated: “to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings.” This statement above suggests that research particularly social research is an exercise that involves people and therefore consideration of human dignity becomes essential. It is with this idea in mind that Cavan as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:56) defined ethics as “a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others”. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:57) pointed to the importance of ethical consideration in research by stating the following:

researchers have a responsibility not only to their profession in its search for knowledge and quest for truth, but also for the subjects they depend on for their work.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:121) stated that social research represents an intrusion into people’s lives. Babbie and Mouton suggested that it is imperative that researchers whatever the specific nature of their work should take into account the effects of their research on participants and act in a manner that would preserve their dignity as human beings. Creswell (1994:57) claimed that ethics involve respect for persons, respect for truth and respect for democratic values. Ethics are about trustworthiness of researchers and the research they produce.

Bell (1993:37) stated that no researcher can demand access to an institution, an organization or to materials. Burgess (1985:106) added to this view by pointing out that access to people involves first being accepted by them and ultimately getting their trust. In this research work data collection was preceded by the sending of letters to the principal and teaching staff of the school under study (Appendix A). In the letters I was requesting for permission of entry into the school and also explaining briefly the purpose of my research study. In addition to the above I made a personal visit to the school to have a face to face meeting with the teaching staff in order to give them a full explanation about the study itself so that each teacher could take an informed decision on whether to participate or not.

During the meeting I explained to them that they had the right to withdraw from the study any time they so wished and that anyone would be free to ask that the data he/she has provided should not be used in the study. I also gave them a guarantee that the data they would provide would be used for nothing else other than the research itself and that no data would be released for whatever purpose without the prior consent of the person who provided them. I again committed myself to observing principles of confidentiality and anonymity in all my dealings with them. To ensure anonymity of participants I decided on using pseudonyms during data presentation. Before analyzing data, I gave myself a chance to feed the data back to some of the teachers to check if the data represented their true perceptions and understanding of participative management. I promised to provide the school with a copy of my research work on completion of the study since they themselves had requested me to do so. A meeting was arranged at the school in which I thanked most profoundly all those who agreed to participate in the study.

3.11 THE STUDY'S LIMITATION

The fact that this research work is a single case study is by itself a limitation. Maselana (2003:44) highlighted the fact that case studies have a tendency of oversimplifying or exaggerating a situation thus making the researcher draw distorted or erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs. Another possible limitation of a case study research is that results of a case study are often not generalizable

except in few cases where there happens to be similarities. I can simply point out that case studies are not strong on extrapolation because they are not large scale investigations like surveys. However, be that the case, my triangulation of data collection techniques with a view to enriching the picture has helped minimize the above possibility

Another possible limitation of this study is that the Hawthorne effect might have come to play during data gathering. As a result I cannot guarantee the honesty and sincerity of responses given by participants because in some instances participants have a tendency of giving the researcher that which they think he is interested in hearing or seeing and that can easily give a false picture about what actually prevails. But I believe and hope that the close friendship and trust I have established with the teachers of that school even prior to my research study has made it easy for them to open up and be genuine and frank in their responses. My friendly appeal to them to divulge everything about participative management motivated the participants to be honest and outspoken.

Another thing that could have been a limitation on this study is that educational management is something which I am passionate about because I have been involved in school management since 1990. The potential risk here is that a researcher who investigates a phenomenon he is passionate about is likely to produce findings that are clouded by emotions and therefore biased. It is for this reason that Taylor and Bogden (1998:28) cautioned that researchers should stay away from areas in which they have deeply felt emotions. Researchers investigating phenomena in which they have vested interest tend to see only those things they want to see and leave out those things they do not agree with.

3.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter has revealed the various research tools that were utilized in carrying out the investigation in the study and it has also explained how the use of these research tools contributed to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of participative management. The chapter has also outlined the characteristic features of interpretive paradigm which is the research tradition within which the study was conducted. I have

also tried to throw light on phenomenological approach which requires that the researcher suspends his value system and approach the phenomenon under investigation in silence. I explained how the use of phenomenological approach assisted me to overcome the problem of bias in the sense that I attempted to be empathic and to see things from the viewpoints of the participants.

In the chapter I have also pointed to possible limitations that might have affected the study but at the same time I explained how I made efforts to overcome the limitations in order to ensure that the quality of the study is not compromised. Details of how I gained entry into the school under study were given in the chapter and ethical issues involving confidentiality and anonymity were also highlighted. The next chapter offers data presentation and it would seek to present data exactly as provided by the participants. It is in this next chapter that the voices of the participants are brought to the forefront.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three I explained the various research techniques and tools that were used in gathering data. I also touched on how the data were analyzed. In this chapter I shall be presenting the findings in the form of responses given by participants on each of the questions asked. The responses are expected to provide an understanding of how the various stakeholders perceive and experience participative management. The responses are also expected to provide information on how the participants themselves interpret and make sense of participative management and how the idea of participative management can be made a reality in our schools.

In this chapter I shall attempt to bring to the fore the feelings and views of participants with a view to presenting the phenomenon of participative management in the manner in which the participants themselves see it. Data from the questionnaires will be presented in the form of tables and graphs with the purpose of making the presentation more vivid and clear. Data from the interviews will at some points be coupled with the direct words of participants in order to make participants' voice more audible. Since I made use of two data gathering tools as highlighted in chapter three data presentation will be done under the following sub-headings :-

- a) Results from questionnaires
- b) Data from interviews

4.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.2.1 RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

As already pointed out in chapter three I administered questionnaires to 16 teachers of the school under study. Responses from the questionnaires reflected a number of

diverse and sometimes contradictory views on participative management. However there were also instances where responses would indicate complete agreement on a particular point of view.

There was unanimous agreement among the respondents on the fact that participative management is a feasible idea and that it is the right way to go. The view that participative management can be more easily implemented in a small organisation than in a big one tended also to be a dominant view among the respondents. This idea was based on the premise that in small organizations the person to person contact occurs most frequently and direct communication with members is more possible. It came out strongly from the questionnaire responses that participative management should not be applied blindly. The majority (80%) of the respondents pointed to the fact that the maturity level of members in an organisation determines how far each member can be allowed to participate. Related to the above view was also the idea that the implementation of participative management is more likely to succeed in urban schools than in rural schools because the respondents happen to believe that those people in towns and cities are more enlightened and knowledgeable than those in rural areas.

The respondents also pointed to a number of advantages that could be obtained through exercising participative management. These benefits included the following:

- (a) Participative management helps develop the potential of individual members in an organisation.
- (b) Participative management leads to ownership of decisions.
- (c) Participative management results in improved personal relations in an organisation.
- (d) Participation leads to the boost of staff morale in an organisation and organisations that practise participative management encounter less conflict situations than those that do not.
- (e) Participation promotes a team approach to problem solving and in that way it reduces stress on management.

Most of the respondents (72%) expressed the view that an effective organisation is the one that is 50% participative and 50% autocratic. It also transpired from the questionnaire responses that the style of leadership determines the manner in which participative management could be implemented and that stakeholders would need workshopping before being engaged in a participative encounter. The respondents

also brought to the surface a number of disadvantages to be expected from participative management. The respondents pointed to the fact that participative management delays implementation of decisions and that consultation which is one aspect of participation wastes time and resources. The respondents also cautioned that participation can be detrimental if it is applied without limits.

Threats to participative management that the respondents highlighted included ignorance and resistance, inexperienced staff members and authoritarian management styles. The responses also brought to light misconceptions the respondents have about participation. These misconceptions included ideas that participative management means everybody is equal and that therefore no one is accountable to anybody; that participative management is synonymous with laissez faire type of management and also that the aim of participative management is to reduce the powers of principals. There was 100% agreement on the fact that there is no hard and fast rule to implement participative management.

Respondents also pointed to ways in which participative management can be made to work. These strategies involved developing an effective communication system, sharing information and delegating duties and responsibilities to subordinates. However, the idea that in a school situation it is the responsibility of the SMT only to ensure that the effective implementation of participative management was rejected by 93% of the respondents. The accepted view was that the implementation of participative management should be the collective responsibility of all those involved in the school. The view expressed by 38% of the respondents was that participative management will take time to be completely realized in South African schools.

4.2.2 DATA FROM INTERVIEWS

As stated in chapter three of this dissertation I held interviews with four participants who are part of the school under study. An interview schedule (Appendix C) consisting of open-ended questions was used to extract from the interviewees information on their understanding of participative management. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, I have decided to use pseudonyms when presenting data from the interviews.

4.2.2.1 Mr. N

Mr. N is a man of about 35 years and he has been an HOD (Head of Department) at this school since 1990. He is confident about himself as a member of the SMT. He believes in honesty and transparency when dealing with management issues. He seemed popular among staff members and told me he is strict in order to be kind.

Meaning of participation

Mr. N explained to me what his understanding of participation is. He said participation involves the distribution of duties and management functions to the staff at various levels of the school and even beyond the school to involve stakeholders. However, Mr. N acknowledged the fact that participation is not only about delegating duties to subordinates. He said it is also about involving other members in decision-making. Mr. N explained that participation requires the involvement of members' right from the conception of the idea to the implementation and evaluation thereof.

Mr. N put it as follows:

Many heads are better than one. Many hands make work lighter. Participation means that you give some of the work to subordinates so as to reduce workload on yourself. You need to make decisions with them so that they can feel that they are valued and are part of the management process. If you do not involve them you are just inviting resistance and opposition for yourself (My journal entry 28 August 2005).

Selectivity of participation

Mr. N acknowledged the fact that it is impossible to involve everyone in everything. He pointed out that competence determines how far one can participate. He said it is bad practice to give responsibility to somebody who does not have the ability to carry out such a responsibility. Mr. N stressed the point that it does not make sense to involve someone in something to which he cannot contribute due to lack of knowledge about the issue. Mr. N advised that managers should learn to involve members only in those issues that they are conversant with.

Mr. N articulated his views as follows:

It is bad manners to give a task to a teacher when you know he is incapable of doing it; the teacher can mess up everything and bring the school into chaos. As for me I can never give responsibility to a teacher who I know will end up disgracing the school. So the rule of thumb is that you do not delegate responsibilities to people who are incapable.

Autocratic management: Its bad and good sides:

Mr. N told me that he had worked under an autocratic management before coming to the school where he is currently teaching. I asked him how it was to work under an autocratic manager. He replied that it was frustrating and demoralizing. He said they as subordinates were not free to express their views openly. They had to accept instructions and implement those instructions precisely as they were given by top management. Decisions were unilaterally made by management and these were to be carried out by subordinates without question. New ideas from subordinates were not easily accepted by management.

Mr. N put it frankly as follows:

That thing called autocracy is not good. You are always in constant fear because you can be accused of being insubordinate any time by management. You cannot come up with your own way of doing things; you must always do as rules prescribe and deviation from the rule means punishment. I hate the rigidity of autocracy because it kills creativity and creates dependency syndrome. Subordinates cannot take initiatives; they have to depend on SMT for everything. I do not like at all, it's bad.

However, Mr. N also admitted that autocratic management is not always bad. He claimed that there are cases where autocracy is needed to keep order in the school. He said that in emergency cases autocracy is able to facilitate quick implementation of decisions since no consultation is necessary. Mr. N claimed autocracy is more appropriate when dealing with stubborn subordinates because the use of force which is the characteristic feature of autocracy has the effect of intimidating them into

submission and in that way opposition to management is minimized. Mr. N explained it thus:

With autocracy decision making is very fast because only very few are involved and the time-consuming practice of consultation is not there. Members do not voice out their opposition for fear of being charged for insubordination and in that way the situation is made to appear calm and peaceful on the surface though deep down there is dissatisfaction.

Shared vision

Mr. N explained that participation gives a chance to individual members of staff to bring together their individual visions into a common vision. Mr. N stressed the fact that envisioning requires a collective effort and a shared vision should be something known to teachers, learners, community and stakeholders and all these groups should participate in the formulation of the vision. Mr. N emphasized it as follows:

A school without a shared vision perishes. You cannot expect members to work together in a school that does not have a common vision. Without common vision each member would be doing his own things, his own way. What I am telling you is no common vision no collaboration among members.

Commitment to organizational goals

Mr. N stated that nobody can be committed to something he was not involved in, in terms of planning and decision-making. Mr. N explained that commitment is a feeling that emanates from inside a person and such a feeling can only be elicited by giving the person a chance to participate. Mr. N told me that from his personal experience he has learnt that when a person is excluded from decision - making, he will always want to sabotage and resist whatever decision is taken without him. According to him:

How can you be expected to commit yourself to plans you never participated in creating? It will be like being forced to feed and bring up a child you did not give birth to. One can only be dedicated to that which he helped create and without that nobody is obliged to be committed to anything.

Ownership of decision

Mr. N emphasized the point that participating in decision-making makes members feel that they own the decision; the decision is collectively owned. He stated that members are willing and prepared to defend a decision they themselves have made.

Mr. N stressed the point like this:

I cannot be proud about a decision I never helped make and I am not even obliged to abide by such a decision. If the decision fails the blame should be put on those who made it since it is their decision and not ours.

I asked Mr. N if he could give an example of a unilateral decision that failed because it did not involve other people. Mr. N narrated an incident that happened at their school in 2001. He said that in 2001 they as management were keen on raising funds for their school. Consequently they as management decided that each class should vigorously engage in a fund-raising campaign by selling *vetkoek* to members of the public after school. The *vetkoek* were to be baked at school in the Home Economics class with the help of class teachers. Class teachers were to facilitate and drive the whole process. Mr. N narrated in an amusing manner how they as management instructed class teachers on what they should do and even prescribed to the class teachers how much they should aim to collect in a month's time. According to Mr. N that fund-raising strategy never succeeded. He said it was only during evaluation that they discovered the reason for the failure. He said:

Our mistake was that we did not involve the class teachers in planning the strategy for fund-raising. We simply told them what they should do and so they were not enthusiastic in executing a plan they did not own.

Promotion of team spirit

Mr. N pointed to the fact that participation leads to collaboration and to teamwork among members. He claimed with confidence that with participation people learn to work together, to solve problems together, to support each other and to take collective responsibility for whatever they do together. He said the spirit of a team is so powerful that it can move obstacles in its way. He claimed:

There is nothing you cannot achieve if you work together as team. Some schools in the Eastern Cape are not productive because the idea of teamwork has not yet dawned in the minds of our teachers. You find a teacher working in his own cocoon and as a result you do not see any remarkable achievement out of that.

Good interpersonal relationship

Mr. N felt strongly on the point that participation creates a warm and friendly atmosphere in a school. He said with participation everybody feels trusted and valued and unnecessary suspicions are removed. Mr. N gave an indication of what happens in a school that lacks participation. He said:

You find teachers back biting one another. You get teachers forming opposition camps and there is tension throughout the day. Without harmonious relations you cannot expect members to give out their best and contribute positively to the growth and development of the school.

Abuse of participation

Mr. N warned that sometimes participation can degenerate into chaos if it is allowed to go on without proper guidance from authority. Mr. N stated that some members of staff can participate, not with a view of ensuring the achievement of school objectives but because they want to push their own personal agendas. Mr. N talked of what he called popular decisions that could be detrimental to the school. He cautioned that a decision can be taken and supported by a majority of members in the meeting but that does not mean the decision is correct. Mr. N warned that principals should guard against accepting popular decisions that will pull the school into the drain. He explained that allowing participation in decision making does not mean that principals should accept every decision taken by the group. He said principals were appointed by the Department of Education because the DoE believe principals are people of integrity who are capable of taking correct decisions. He added that principals are accountable to the DoE and stakeholders for whatever happens at their schools. Mr. N. put it as follows:

You see, a principal cannot tell the DoE that it is the teacher's decision when the DoE asks him to account for the wrong decision taken at his school. It is the principal alone who would have to answer to the DoE and stakeholders for what happens at the school.

4.2.2.2 Mr. S

Mr. S is a man of about 50 years of age and is the second principal to be appointed at this school. Mr. S believes in democratic management but he claimed that democracy becomes detrimental once it is taken to extremes. His belief is that good management is one that maintains a balance between democracy and autocracy.

Involvement of stakeholders

Mr. S was of the opinion that a school is a social entity that exists to serve the needs of the community and consequently a school cannot be separated from the community in its surroundings. Mr. S stressed the point that a school cannot survive without the support and involvement of the community. Mr. S attempted to illustrate his point by stating that the school gets financial support by way of school fees and also human resources by way of learners from the surrounding community.

When I asked Mr. S about the advantages of parental involvement his reply was:

You must remember, learners fear and respect their parents more than teachers. If learners see their parents frequently at school, they stop misbehaving. Also when a learner misbehaves at school it helps very much if you call his parent to school to talk to his child, I am saying this from experience.

However, Mr. S warned that the principal should be careful when involving parents in school matters because they can easily overstep their boundaries. Mr. S pointed to the fact that parents have sometimes a tendency of wanting to involve themselves in matters that do not concern them and if their participation is unlimited that can easily bring chaos and confusion to the school especially if the community is illiterate and less enlightened.

Learner participation in decision -making

Mr. S expressed concern about the involvement of learners in decision-making processes at High Schools. He was referring to those learners who are members of SGB at High schools. Mr. S pointed to some of the responsibilities of the SGB such as recommending teachers for appointments and recommending disciplinary measures against irresponsible teachers. Mr. S's concern was that it would be out of order for learners who are part of the SGB to be involved in discussing disciplinary actions to be taken against misbehaving teachers. Mr. S expressed his concern as follows:

I do not imagine how learners who are SGB members can participate in discussing the fate of a misbehaving teacher. Those learners will have no respect for the teacher concerned and they will think they are superior to the teacher since they can decide about the punishment to be given to him. Again when the SGB is selecting teachers for appointment, the learner component of the SGB cannot participate in that matter since the matter is above their understanding. You cannot expect a learner to appoint a teacher that should teach him, it doesn't make sense at all. Yes, I do agree learners can participate in those issues that are within their level of thinking like for example deciding on how many matches a school can have a year but not in complex issue like recommending the appointment of a teacher.

Fear of sharing power

Mr. S pointed out that it is not easy to share power with subordinates especially for those principals that are accustomed to an authoritarian style of management. Mr. S explained that sharing power is a process that will take time for principals to get used to because it is a new practice in management. Mr. S expressed his views as follows:

When you share power with subordinates, you always have that feeling that you might end up losing your power. You begin to get a sense that the subordinates might think they are equal with you. Any way power sharing is good despite our fear as principals that it would make us lose authority.

Misconception about participation

Mr. S explained that some subordinates tend to misinterpret the concept of participation. Mr. S said some subordinates think that the right to participate means

that no decision should be taken without consulting everybody. Mr. S pointed out that the idea of consulting everybody before any decision is taken is unrealistic. He said there are things in life that are not negotiable and which must be carried out without questioning. Mr. S put it frankly as follows:

There is no such a thing as consulting everybody for everything. Such a thing does not exist even in the most democratic countries of the world like USA. Even if one were to try it, he would fail because no one can satisfy everybody. I'm telling you, anyone who tries to satisfy everybody ends up satisfying nobody.

Promoting participation

On the question of what could be done to promote participative management at schools, Mr. S replied that there is nothing that can be done to involve conservative teachers who belong to the old school of thought. Mr. S expressed his views as follows:

You cannot teach an old dog new tricks. It's very difficult to change the mindset of a person who has internalized an idea. We should however, not lose hope. We only need to be patient and try to educate members about participative management through workshops. Me, I believe if you do not want to change, change will change you because it is inevitable and it will happen whether you like it or not.

4.2.2.3 Mr. L

Mr. L is a young teacher of about 29 years and he is involved in the SGB of the school representing the teacher component. He told me he joined the school in 1999 through the redeployment process and also that he was now serving his second term of office as a member of the SGB. During the conversation I had with him, I learned that he has been involved in most decision making processes of the SGB on a number of issues. Mr. L seemed conversant with management and governance matters. Mr. L stated in no uncertain terms that to him participation can only be said to be genuine if it serves the purpose of developing and empowering the individuals.

Participation and Empowerment

Mr. L stated that the more a person is given a chance to participate in something, the more developed his capabilities become. Mr. L put it like this:

When you delegate some duties to your subordinate, you do not do it because you are lazy to do the work yourself, but because you want to develop the person and so that he can gain experience. A person who is not given a chance to participate in the activities of his organization feels alienated and such a person loses self-esteem. My suggestion is that principals should open up an opportunity for participation because by doing that they would be building up the self-confidence of their staff.

Reduction of stress levels

Mr. L pointed to bad practice by some principals who manage public schools as if they are running their private businesses. He said these principals centralize everything and do everything themselves because they have no confidence in their staff members. Mr. L stated that the problem about such principals is that they become victims of stress because of the unnecessary workload they have created for themselves:

You know, sometimes principals are responsible for their own downfall. You find a principal taking all the work upon himself and not opening up participation by other staff members. The result is that, that poor principal finds himself collapsing under the unbearable pressure which he created for himself. I am telling you, if such principals could distribute management functions to other staff members, stress levels would be dramatically reduced or there would even be no need for principals to have stress.

Tapping unused talents

Mr. L claimed that every individual has a potential given to him by God. He said participation allows for that hidden talent to be unleashed and to come out to the open. Mr. L stated that principals ought to know that if they do not offer an opportunity for staff members to utilize their talents, they are killing those talents. Mr. L reminded me about the law of nature that anything that is not utilized dies from disuse:

If I were the principal, I would identify those things each staff member is strong at and then I would give that staff member a responsibility that matches with his strong point. I would also make sure that I create a friendly and tension free environment in which every staff member could realize his potential to grow and develop.

Creativity and change

Mr. L was of the opinion that participation leads to a happy staff that is always willing to experiment with new ideas. Mr. L claimed that participation itself is a source of motivation for staff members and it leads to a free exchange of ideas among members. Members become receptive to new changes as a result. According to Mr. L, a happy group of staff members is always ready and prepared to strive together for excellence and such a motivated group take risks and new adventures together. He said:

When you are happy at work you are not afraid to take new initiatives, you do not wait for the principal to give you instruction; you simply do what you think is good for the school.

Dependency Syndrome

Mr. L expressed the view that lack of participation leads to member passivity. Mr. L said members become inactive because they are used to waiting for orders from the boss. Mr. L frankly put it as follows:

A management system that turns subordinates into puppets is not good. You know, people working under such a system can never grow to be independent. I have been in a school where the principal was autocratic and everything was centralized. When the principal was away on leave we would not know where to start from dealing with management issues because we were used to being told what to do. The situation would be chaotic until the principal returns from leave.

4.2.2.4 Mr. J

Mr. J is an older man of approximately 64 years of age and is the headman of the village after whom the school is named. Coincidentally he is the chairperson of the

SGB of the school under study. When I asked him how it happened that he is the headman and at the same time the chairperson of the SGB, his reply was that the actual SGB chairperson passed away and he was asked to hold the position until the community appoints a suitable person for the position. Mr. J is very critical of a participative approach with regards to management. To Mr. J participative management is tantamount to a laissez faire type of management because with participative management everybody does what he or she wants on the pretext that they are exercising their rights.

Mr. J insisted that the conversation be held in Xhosa and I could understand because he was not conversant in English. The data given below is my own translation of his direct words. Mr. J was not at all easy to interview because most of the time he would deviate from the point and talk about things I never asked him about. Every time I tried to bring him to order he would become irritated and consequently I had to handle him with care throughout the interviews.

Participation leading to a state of confusion

Mr. J pointed to democracy as something that brought confusion to management of institutions because every “fool” has a right to say something even if what he says does not make sense. Mr. J pointed out that because of this participative democracy, South Africa is today in a mess. People are uncontrollable and ungovernable because everyone claims he or she has rights; even criminals have rights and no one wants to listen to anybody. Mr. J said that today children do not want to listen to parents because they claim they have democratic rights to have a say and participate in decision making. Mr. J’s direct words were translated as follows:

Where on earth can you have a child participating in decision making? What experience does a child have to take a decision? In the good olden days a man who does not own a flock of sheep or cattle was not allowed to have a say or even to participate in the “meeting of men”. What good idea can you get from a man who does not own even a dog? To me a proper participation is the one that allows only “men of integrity” to take decision’s and not everybody. Look today because of this democracy any ‘nincompoop’ is allowed to make noise. There is just no direction.

No bad authoritarian management

Mr. J pointed out that he saw nothing wrong with an authoritarian manager. To Mr. J autocracy can never be bad if it is done for the good of the institution. Mr. J expressed his views as follows:

You know, God created people in such a way that some people are more gifted than others and usually those who are more gifted are few. It is my belief that those few that are more gifted should control and take decisions on behalf of the less gifted majority. You can't have the less gifted taking decisions just because they are in the majority, it just doesn't make sense.

Be autocratic in order to be good

Mr. J stated that autocracy becomes bad only if those in power exercise it in order to protect their own personal interests and not for the good of the organization:

When you kick somebody from behind in order to force him to work hard to produce food, that type of ill-treatment is justifiable because you do it so that the person does not suffer from hunger in the end. That's the kind of autocracy I talk about and which I recommend. I believe it is better to have autocracy that brings order than to have participation that brings chaos.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented data precisely as given by the respondents both in the questionnaires and also during interviews. I have attempted to explore and bring to light the views and feelings of the respondents on participative management. I counted and aggregated responses of the participants to each question in the questionnaire so as to determine the dominant views and during the interviews I made it a point that my personal beliefs and values did not influence the participants' responses. I did this in order to strengthen the quality for this study. In order to ensure that the voices of the participants were not hidden I adopted the style of quoting the direct words as uttered by the participants. In the next chapter I discuss the findings and the implications of these findings for the Education system in South Africa.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSING AND INTERPRETING THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I analyzed and presented the findings as given by the research participants themselves. During the data analysis and presentation I made it a point not to interfere with the data in any way because I wanted the data to speak for themselves. The idea was also to ensure that the data represented a true and genuine reflection of the participants' views and perceptions about participative management. This is in line with Edmund Husserl's slogan of "Back to the things themselves" which in other words suggests that if you want to find out the essence of a phenomenon you must let the people who "lived it" tell you (Merriam 2001:48). Husserl cautioned us as researchers to bracket our personal values and perceptions so as to allow the phenomenon to unfold itself without being disturbed.

I engaged in data analysis and presentation in Chapter 4 with Husserl's suggestions in mind. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:296) claimed that analysis involves discovering and deriving patterns in the data, looking for categories and themes in the data and trying to sort out what the data are about. Hitchcock and Hughes in the above statement describe precisely what I did with the data in the previous chapter. In Chapter 4, I analyzed the data using an inductive approach. Inductive data analysis means that categories and patterns emerge from the data rather than being imposed on the data prior to data collection. During the process of data analysis I had to do the coding. My idea of coding was to summarize the data and classify the answers to individual questions into meaningful categories, in order to bring out their essential patterns. I had to create coding frames for each question in the questionnaire and then break down the data into units of meaningful ideas.

In this chapter I interpret and discuss the analyzed data in order to provide a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions and unique experiences of participative management. The discussions will be guided by themes and categories that emerged during the data analysis in the previous chapter, but in this instance the sub-themes are merged into major themes for purposes of discussion. For the discussions in this chapter I have identified the following themes: views on participation; barriers to participative management; "we together can do it"; shared visions; a school is not a secluded island; engaging in dialogue to remove tensions; adopting positive mental models; and benefits derived from participation. These themes are discussed with the goals of the research study in mind and also set against the framework provided by literature in Chapter 2. In order to provide background to the discussion as well as to keep the reader on track with my line of argument, I will first give a brief recapitulation of my research study.

5.2 REVIEW

The reader is reminded that I am here exploring the perceptions and experiences of the various stakeholders about participative management. In this research, my interest has been to understand the subjective experiences and individual perceptions of stakeholders with regard to participative management. I wanted to find out how these various stakeholders describe, understand, interpret and make sense of participative management. In line with this purpose the content of the questionnaires and interviews was structured in such a way as to address the following issues:

- a) What perceptions and understanding do the stakeholders have about participative management?
- b) What suggestions could the stakeholders put forward as means and ways of making participative management effective in our schools?
- c) What factors pose a threat to the successful implementation of participative management and how could these obstacles be overcome?

A number of themes emerged during data analysis in Chapter 4 and each theme represented a particular idea about participative management. These themes are now

discussed and interpreted in the next section with a view to providing an in-depth understanding of the participants' views on participative management.

5.3 VIEWS ON PARTICIPATION

From the responses given by the research participants, numerous descriptions and interpretations of participative management emerged. These interpretations ranged from participative management as meaning equality for all, participative management being a situation where everyone rules, as well as participative management having come to guard against the dictatorial powers of autocratic principals. These divergent views on participation confirmed the point made by Mungunda (2003:22) when he stated: "...participation is a concept surrounded by confusion despite much thought and activity." These diverse views on participation are a reflection of the different ways in which individual learning institutions apply and implement the idea of participative management. The different interpretations given by the respondents also confirmed Sarason's view (1995:18) who claimed that participation is an idea that is easy to state but extra-ordinarily difficult to respect in action.

However, the questionnaire data revealed that there was 100% agreement among the participants that participative management is the right way to go and that it is an idea that is possible (Chapter 4). Some of the respondents pointed out that a participative approach can be turned into a living reality only if staff members in a learning institution can open up their hearts to one another and adopt positive attitudes that are receptive to change.

My personal view in this regard is that participative management is part of the change that has engulfed many of our schools in the 21st century. Participation is here to stay and should therefore be endured and accepted. Moloji (2002:8) added her voice by stating that the key is to learn to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances within which our learning institutions operate. Moloji (2002:9) further argued that for participation to take effect in our schools we need strategic, transformational and visionary school managers who are capable of dealing with change creatively. As the questionnaire revealed, almost 93,7% of the respondents attested to the fact that the

success and effectiveness of participative management is contingent upon the kind of leadership that is capable of perceiving a good deal of change and uncertainty in the internal and external environment (Chapter 4). This view finds support again in Moloi's statement (2002:10) that effective leaders are the ones who have the ability to sense changes in their environments, adapt their strategic and operational approaches to those changes and then engage the hearts and minds of everyone involved in the school to grasp the challenges presented.

It emerged from the responses that participation is more than just delegating duties and responsibilities to the subordinates. Mr. N who felt strongly on this point claimed that participation in a broader sense is about involving other members and stakeholders in decision-making. The enthusiasm and feelings of the respondents on this point are reflected in Mr. N's strong words:

You need to make decisions with them so that they can feel that they are valued and are part of the management process. If you do not involve them you are just inviting resistance and opposition for yourself. (Chapter 4).

These views of Mr. N find support in the words of Smith (2003: 24) who claimed that what matters in decision making, is who makes decisions about what and for whom. Weisbord (1987:261) in support of collective decision making remarked as follows: "We are likely to carry out decisions we have helped make." It also transpired from the questionnaire responses given that some of the research participants (62,3%) are of the view that involvement of people in decision-making should be based on one's competence and ability. One of the respondents (Mr. N) who supported this view argued that "It is very frustrating and disappointing to involve an individual in something to which he/she has very little or nothing to contribute". (Chapter 4). These words of Mr. N are in agreement with Lewin's assertion as cited in Weisbord (1987: 260) that involving people is a principle or value that must be applied uniquely in each situation.

I am inclined to believe that there is some truth in the views expressed by the respondents above, that any kind of participation that is allowed to go on indiscriminately turns out to be detrimental to the organization. Let me in this instance

take an example of a school principal who plans to hold a meeting to discuss financial issues like balancing of accounts and auditing of finance books. Such a meeting cannot include everybody. This view points to one fact that participation should not be done for the sake of it but rather it should be a process in which those involved are capable of making meaningful contributions.

The view expressed by the respondents that participation in decision making should be selective, also gained support in the old African culture in which participation in making decisions was something restricted to the so called “men of integrity”. In those days they were men who were known to own a large amount of livestock and even had more than one wife. Poor men who did not own even a dog were not allowed to stand up and express their ideas because it was believed that one can not get any constructive idea from a person who has failed to create a name for himself and his family. It was a well known fact that such poor men had no place in the “meeting of men” and these poor men were in most cases obliged to abide by decisions they did not participate in formulating. The criterion for participating was that one should first prove himself in a number of ways that he is capable of participating in major decisions. The findings revealed that some respondents like Mr. J still subscribe to the principle of selective involvement which suggests participation only by those who are capable. The respondents’ belief in the idea of selective participation is reflected in the words of Mr. J who stated as follows: “To me proper participation is the one that allows only “wise men” to take decisions” (Chapter 4 page 82).

There was also a view expressed by 86,2% of the respondents that participation goes along with responsibility. What the research participants meant by this was the fact that if one has participated in the formulation of a particular decision, he/she should be prepared and willing to bear whatever consequences would come about as a result of that decision. Participation entails that one would be obliged to abide by any decision in whose formulation he participated and one would also be expected to commit himself to seeing that the decision he/she helped to make is carried out. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:71) concurred with the above idea when they stated that participation is about sharing control and responsibility.

The responses also revealed to my surprise that participation does not always bring positive results to an organization. The respondents pointed out that sometimes the right to participate can be abused by some members of the organization. Members can use the opportunity to participate not to promote the achievement of organizational goals but to push their own personal agendas. The respondents alluded to the fact that in the process of allowing participation the principal should always guard against what Mungunda (2003: 24) called “popular decisions”. Popular decisions are those decisions favoured by the majority of the members but which may not be necessarily correct in terms of education law and policy. One of the respondents cautioned that the fact that a decision is supported by the majority of participants or members is not a guarantee or valid proof of its correctness. After all experience has proved that some of the decisions that gained the support of the majority have ended up in disastrous situations. It is essential that principals should at all times be on the alert to avoid taking popular decisions that would lead their schools to calamity and in line with this view the respondents were in unanimous agreement (100%) about the fact that participative management does not absolve the school principal from accountability (Chapter 4, page 57).

In terms of the education law and policy, the principal has to account for whatever correct or wrong decision is taken at his school irrespective of whether that decision was reached through participative means or not. It is the principal and the principal alone who would be taken to task by the Department of Education (DoE) and the stakeholders should things not go according to set norms and standards of the school. Caldwell and Spinks (1992:142) defined accountability as a condition under which a member of the organization must report to his superiors on the overall performance of his total work irrespective of what he has delegated to others. This is in congruence with the idea expressed by 87,5% of the respondents who argued against the view that participative management is synonymous with a *laissez faire* type of management. Even during this period of participative approach, principals are expected and required by law to play their role in directing the way things should go in order to avoid chaos and anarchy in schools. This idea of principals being accountable to the DoE and stakeholders has in a way become an inhibiting factor in the promotion of participative management. Some principals have developed fear of completely implementing participative management because of the feeling that it could lead to the

taking of incorrect decisions which might get them into trouble with the DoE. However, Moloi (2002:78) protested against this practice by stating that there can be no justification for depriving an individual of the right to participate in the management of his organization.

These findings reflect that respondents understand participative management to mean the devolution of power to the subordinates. In line with this view Mampuru (1994: 22) defined power as the ability to control the decision making process of the organization. In my opinion, sharing power implies that the leader delegates some of his powers, responsibilities and authorities to the subordinates with a view to granting them an opportunity to participate in the management of the organization. Regarding how much power the manager could share with his subordinates is something beyond the scope of this study to consider, but my personal view would be that the amount of power to decentralize to the subordinates is largely a matter of discretion. The manager could use his own discretion depending on the situation and on the preparedness and readiness of the subordinates to share power. The view expressed by 62,3% of the respondents on this issue is that the experience and maturity level of the subordinates should be taken into account when decentralizing power to the subordinates (Chapter 4, page 65). This is in agreement with the view expressed by Gann (1998:102) who stated that the degree and the extent to which the manager shares his powers with subordinates depends on the experience of the people involved and the environment in which they function.

Musaazi (1987:86) advised that in decentralizing powers the manager should be able to decide what he should do himself and what others should do for him. Musaazi remarked that the manager could for example reserve for himself the authority to deal with more important decisions such as decisions that have relatively greater public relations and those that have financial implications for the organization. Musaazi however, cautioned that it is not advisable to delegate the evaluation and appraisal of subordinates' performance. Caldwell and Spinks (1992:148) made a word of caution that sharing powers and responsibilities should be done with extreme caution. Caldwell and Spinks stated that if the power sharing is applied carelessly or improperly there is bound to be adverse repercussions and that the benefits that accrue

from participation will be virtually nullified. It is thus essential that the manager fully understands the capacity of the subordinates to whom he is delegating power.

Caldwell and Spinks (1992:156) suggested three criteria for sharing power and responsibilities with subordinates, namely test of expertise, test of jurisdiction and zone of indifference. Test of expertise states that, it is just not enough for the subordinates to have a stake in the decision if they do not have the competence and expertise to contribute effectively to the formulation of the decision. In other words this means that the manager can only involve the subordinates in those areas of decision making for which the subordinates have the capacity to participate. This supports the idea expressed by Mr. N who stated that it is frustrating and also a futile exercise to try to involve the subordinates in issues that are beyond their capacity to deal with (Chapter 4, page 71). Test of jurisdiction according to Caldwell and Spinks, refers to those issues in which an individual is entitled by law to participate. For instance formal organizations like schools are organized on a hierarchical order with the principal on top of the hierarchy followed by the deputy, head of department, teachers and then learners. In terms of the education law and policy the individual staff at each level of the hierarchy is entitled to taking decisions only on those issues over which he/she has jurisdiction. According to this view a member of staff may have an interest in an issue, but that member of staff cannot participate in the discussion of the issue if it does not fall within his test of jurisdiction.

Caldwell and Spinks (1992:158) also stressed the fact that when delegating powers to the subordinates, the manager should first assess the preparedness and readiness of the subordinates to exercise the powers delegated to them. Caldwell and Spinks claimed that there are certain issues in which subordinates may not have interest and such issues are said to fall within the subordinate's zone of indifference. This idea by Caldwell and Spinks tends to agree with the view expressed by Mr. L, who asserted that to seek active involvement of subordinates in matters in which they have no interest is to court resistance in all its various forms (Chapter 4, page 80). However, responses from the participants also indicated that in reality there is no learning institution that can be said to be completely participative or completely non-participative in the absolute sense of the word. A school can allow participation by stakeholders when dealing with certain issues, but can be less participative to

stakeholders when it comes to handling other matters. This view is confirmed by van der Westhuizen (1996:85) who acknowledged the fact that it is very unlikely that an organization can be completely open in the absolute sense of the word. Van der Westhuizen claimed that in a comparative sense certain schools tend to lean towards one side or the other of the open-closed continuum (Chapter 2).

It was revealed by the responses that participation by parents and stakeholders is more likely to succeed in urban schools than in rural schools. Of course this view is based on the feeling that members of the community in urban areas are more “exposed” and enlightened than those in the rural areas. It is a known fact that an enlightened and literate person is capable of meaningful participation and contributing effectively to whatever issue needs to be tackled. This brings to mind the fact that communities in which schools operate are not the same in terms of their literacy levels and understanding of issues. It is no exaggeration to state that it is possible for one to find that more than 40% of the people in our rural villages cannot read and write their own names and these figures are confirmed by the information released by Statistics South Africa in 2001 (Chapter 2). This lack of formal education among our rural communities is one inhibiting factor that limits the extent to which these rural communities can participate meaningfully in school matters particularly in issues pertaining to school finances and curriculum. In urban areas the problem of illiteracy is not so acute hence there is this hypothesis that participation by parents and stakeholders is more effective and successful in urban schools than in rural schools because urban communities are more understanding and they grasp school issues more easily.

However, I hope that the efforts by the DoE to introduce Adult Basic Education (ABET) with a view to capacitating our communities would in a way help to ease the problem of illiteracy so that the rural communities in particular could be able to participate meaningfully in the education of their children. The lack of formal education suffered mostly by rural communities has in some instances provided justification for some conservative principals to exclude parents from participation on the grounds that their low level of education has made them ignorant and therefore unable to understand complex school issues. At the moment there is a heated debate between the Principals’ Association and the DoE in the Eastern Cape about the fact

that parents who participate in School Governing Bodies (SGB) should be required by law to have attained a particular level of formal education before being allowed to participate. The Principals' Association is suggesting that 8 (former Standard Six) should be the minimum requirement for a parent to participate in the SGB. The reason put forward by the Principals' Association is that it is extremely difficult to train and workshop parents who do not even have the basic level of education. However, on the other hand the DoE stands firm on the fact that the level of education cannot be used as a criterion to exclude parents from participating in matters of their children's schools. The DoE argues that in terms of the constitution every parent has the legal right to participate in school matters irrespective of his/her level of education because schools exist to serve communities.

It emerged from the data that 62,3% of the respondents are of the opinion that participative management would be more effective and easier to implement in small organizations than in big ones (Chapter 4, page 57). This view emanates from the assumption that in small organizations there is no communication problem and it is possible for the manager to have face-to-face interaction with every member. Kaura (2004:1) claimed that communication is the lifeblood of organizational management and that participation cannot occur without members communicating with one another. Kaura (2004:11) claimed that communication is the exchange and sharing of information, attitudes, ideas and emotions and that communication is an essential prerequisite for any form of participation to take place. Kaura (2004:20) pointed out that managers who make effective use of communication are able to listen to what the staff members have to say and are therefore more participative in their approach.

5.4 BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT

The responses garnered, reflect a number of factors that inhibit participative management. One such inhibiting factor pointed out by 18,7% of the respondents was the fact that participative management is viewed as a change that has come to reduce the powers of principals (Chapter 4, page 60). This ill-conceived idea has resulted in some principals seeing participation by parents and stakeholders in a negative light especially by those principals that like to keep power and authority.

Participative management entails delegating some of the manager's powers and authority to subordinates (Smith 2003:110). However, it transpired from the responses that there is reluctance and unwillingness on the part of some school managers to decentralize power because they feel sharing power with subordinates would reduce their own importance and status as principals. This fear of sharing power with subordinates is reflected in the words of Mr. S who stated: "When you share power with subordinates, you always have that feeling that you might end up losing power. You begin to get that sense that the subordinates might think that they are equal with you" (Chapter 4, page 77). The problem in this case emanates from the fact that the principal himself lacks confidence in the capabilities of the subordinates and this makes him reluctant in delegating power to them for fear that they might not deliver. Normally this happens with those principals who are perfectionists and who believe that they are the only ones who can do things the best way. It came out from interviews that sometimes it may happen that the subordinates themselves are reluctant to take up responsibilities and authority assigned to them because the principal himself has failed to motivate his subordinates to accept new responsibilities. The subordinates might feel that by delegating responsibilities to them, the principal is merely thrusting additional work on them and thereby lightening his own burden whilst at the same time taking all the credit.

What the above idea points to is the fact that it is essential for subordinates to be made to understand the purpose of decentralizing power (Musaazi 1987:88). Subordinates ought to know that the whole idea of delegating power and responsibilities to them is to empower and capacitate them. Mr. L (one of the interviewees) explained the rationale behind delegating responsibilities as follows: "When you delegate some of your responsibilities to your subordinates, you do not do it because you are lazy to do the work yourself, but because you want to develop them so that they can gain experience." (Chapter 4, page 79).

Another challenge to implementation of participative management as pointed out by the respondents is the legacy of apartheid in the field of education, which has left our country South Africa with a system that is characterized by a culture of resistance to change (Ndhlovu *et al.* 1999:24). People are accustomed to things remaining the way

they are to such an extent that they do not want to break with authoritarian practices of the past and accept democratic values that come along with the idea of participation. People are used to accepting prescriptive rules, which are the characteristic feature of the old order and this has instilled on the minds of the people the culture of dependency. As a result people are sometimes not willing to take initiatives even when an opportunity is created for them to participate. The unwillingness of some people to break with the past is illustrated in the words of Mr. S (interviewee) who said, “You cannot teach an old dog new tricks. It is very difficult to change the mindset of a person who has internalized an idea.” (Chapter 4, page 78). My personal view on this point is that it is worth remembering that the idea of participation is a new notion that has just come along with the new democratic dispensation in the country and any new idea brings with it a feeling of uncertainty because people especially managers do not know what it holds for them. It is for this reason that Moloi (2002:70) pointed out that creating a participative learning organization is a daunting task which requires that those who are supposed to drive the process be patient, firstly with themselves and secondly with others.

5.5 “TOGETHER WE CAN DO IT”

From the data it came out strongly that working together is the key to creating effective and participative learning organizations. The power of working as a coherent group committed to the same purpose is reflected in the words of Mr. N who stated unequivocally as follows: “There is nothing you cannot achieve if you work together as a united team” (Chapter 4, page 78). These words find support in the statement by Senge (1990:234) who said, “We cannot function alone because the world is a web of interconnections.” These statements concur with the notion expressed by respondents that schools can become successful, effective and participative through working together. I want to point out upfront that the idea of working together starts with dialogue in which members of a learning organization suspend their assumptions and enter into genuine working together.

Senge (1990:352) highlighted the fact that the idea of working together has something to do with what he calls alignment. Alignment in this context means functioning as a

whole. Senge pointed to the advantage of working together as follows: “When you function as a cohesive group committed to a common purpose of your school you are bound to succeed in the achievement of goals”. Responses indicated that the idea of functioning as a whole increases the members’ capacity to think together and act with full co-ordination and in this way a sense of unity is created because members know each other’s hearts. One respondent (Mr. L) went even further when he said that working together teaches members in the group to attend to the perceptions of others in order to arrive at shared meanings and mutual understanding. The idea of working together involves the practice of dialogue and discussion and these are the two distinct ways by which members in a group converse.

In the process of holding dialogue and discussions, members in the group are able to solve their problems by means of collective discussions and they explore complex issues creatively. They listen to each other and suspend their own views to better hear those of others. The physicist, David Bohm, as cited in Moloji (2002:82) claimed that the meaning of the word “dialogue” suggests a free flow of meaning between people and this means that with dialogue there is free exchange of ideas and information among members. The majority of the respondents (63,3%) attested to the fact that working together makes it possible for group members to access a larger pool of common meaning which an individual alone would not be able to do. Working together is by its very nature participative and there was a general agreement among the research participants that for it to be successful members should regard others as colleagues. Those who work together should learn and be willing to suspend their assumptions and hold those assumptions in front of the group for all to see. This calls for a transparency that would enable members to share differing views and appreciate the views of other members. The ability to work together helps members to appreciate the uniqueness of other people’s points of view and this again helps to clarify any ambiguities that exist in the group. It is a well known fact that cohesive groups are able to bring together opposing ideas and they are able to confront ideas that otherwise would have remained inside the heads of individuals.

Moloji (2002:90) supported the idea of working together expressed by respondents by stating: “In working together we begin to see reality through the eyes of others and this opens up new perspectives for ourselves”. Moloji further said, “Working together

helps us to see strengths in other people and also to draw strength from their support”. One would perhaps pose a question as to why the idea of working together is greatly advocated today by management scholars. My response to such a question would be that if we look at the incessant changes that are taking place, everyone can agree that the rate of change threatens people’s confidence in their skills, abilities and knowledge and so it becomes incumbent upon us as professional people and as educators to open up dialogue about the impact this change has on our professional mastery. Individuals cannot do it alone; we need the support of each other. Senge (2000:6) agreed with the above idea when he stated: “We need collective capacities, skills and attitudes that will help us confront the challenges of a shifting landscape and we can attain this goal through our collective efforts, nourished in a spirit of togetherness”.

5.6 SHARED VISION

Martin Luther King Junior once said: “I have a dream” and what followed upon that was a vision that changed a nation (Moloi 2002:49). The above assertion shows clearly the power that a compelling vision can have in inspiring people to new levels. The idea of having a shared vision as a way of promoting participation emerged frequently from most of the interviews I held with respondents. Mr. N who seemingly strongly supports the notion of shared vision emphasized his point as follow: “You cannot expect members to work together in a school that does not have a common vision. Without a common vision, each member would be doing his own thing, his own way “(Chapter 4, page 73). These strong words of Mr. N indicate the importance of a shared vision in focusing the efforts of individuals so that they as a group become committed to working together towards a common goal.

Heiberg (1997:20) defined a shared vision as a “coherent, creditable picture of the desired future.” It must, however be remembered that the shared picture of the future I talk about here emerges from the visions of individuals who work together to achieve a common goal in the organization. The findings pointed to a number of benefits that could be reaped from sharing a common vision. The interviewees were in agreement (82,3%) on the fact that building a shared vision encourages collaborative

undertakings, for instance, in the case of a school facilitating the desire among teachers to plan lessons together and discuss difficult or problem areas in their different subjects. Moloji (2002:48) explained that a shared vision is not merely an idea, which comes out of the blue, but rather it is an idea that emerges in a school where teachers truly care about their practices and about the future of their learners. Moloji further pointed out that successful transformation which is one of the imperatives of modern times, depends on having a powerful and shared vision and that without this common vision the efforts of transforming schools into participative institutions would be futile.

A common vision is not an idea owned by an individual but rather it is a participative process in which every member and stakeholder in the organization should be involved. In a school the change process is not possible unless teachers are willing and motivated to be part of the change and teachers can only be fully engaged in something that has been clearly communicated to them. A vision can be said to be shared only if all those who are supposed to work towards its achievement are made aware of its content and it must be remembered that a shared vision is never imposed on members but rather it should be compelling enough to invoke all members to support it. One may perhaps ask the question as to what effective medium could be used to ensure that the vision reaches all those who are supposed to implement it. From the interviews I had with research participants, it transpired that the principal, by virtue of the strategic position he occupies in the school, is one of the most relevant people that can serve as a medium for communicating the shared vision to members. The respondents during interviews suggested that the principal could communicate the vision by incorporating messages about the vision into the day to day activities of his school and also by behaving at all times in a manner that is consistent with the vision of the school.

Some of the respondents (72,3%) talked of principals who help to make excellent and vibrant visions for their schools and thereafter engage in behaviours that are not compatible with the visions they helped to formulate. The respondents amusingly referred to such principals as people who are like signposts that only point the way but do not go that way. This is in opposition to Musaaazi's assertion that true leaders are those who practise what they preach. Respondents suggested that one other way of

communicating the vision is for the principal to distribute newsletters to members and also to talk about the vision during parents meetings held at the school. Moloji (2002: 52) made the following suggestions: “If you want to create a shared vision you need to engage in sustained dialogue and conversation where individuals can feel free to express their dreams and also listen to the dreams of others”. Moloji further stated that in such conversations individuals would open up their hearts to each other without fear of being rejected or ridiculed.

It was however, pointed out by some respondents that it is an acceptable practice for the principal to have his own vision, but that he needs to put time aside to listen to the visions of other members of staff and if possible the principal will have to align his visions with those of other staff members so that these visions could together coalesce into a common vision. Moloji (2002:52) again added her voice by stating: “If you are determined to bring about meaningful change in your school you should make an effort to nurture a sense of shared responsibility and shared commitment for the shared vision”. Moloji pointed to the fact that the absence of a shared vision in many South African schools has led to conflicts resulting from differences in thinking patterns and pedagogical approaches leading to insubordination and confusion. When teachers in a school have a shared vision their activities will not be compartmentalized, rather teachers will develop strategies to link their day to day activities to the shared vision. A shared vision helps teachers to keep their school on course even during times of tremendous stress because according to Moloji, a shared vision is an ethical force that develops hope in spite of difficulty.

From my fifteen years of teaching experience I have come to realize that having a shared vision sometimes helps teachers to align what they do currently, with what they want to achieve in the future and in that way they would be in a position to measure whether their actions are still moving in the desired direction. It was confirmed by one of the respondents that a vision that is truly shared can serve as a binding force among teachers especially during times of transition, confusion and uncertainty. Whitaker (1995:56) agrees with the respondent’s view by saying: “When you share a common goal the whole school can be seen as a team that functions together in order to achieve the shared view.” Whitaker claimed that teachers come to school with a diversity of beliefs, assumptions and values but through a shared vision

these different ideas can be consolidated so that the team can reach a mutually accepted direction.

A number of ways in which a useful vision can be achieved was suggested by the respondents and these included the following: (a) discussing the vision and its meaning with colleagues so that everybody can be on the same level of understanding about the vision (b) adopting a culture of sharing decisions so that teachers can understand each other (c) having a member in the school who would constantly remind other members that there is an important mission to be achieved (d) creating a vision that is honest, coherent and that encourages members to be involved (e) having a vision that is inspiring enough to make members understand why there is a need to break with the past and engage with the future.

One might perhaps wonder what the relationship is between having a shared vision and a participative approach. I think I need to point out that having a shared vision is part of the process of participation in the sense that during the process of building a shared vision, members learn to co-operate and solve problems together. Vision crafting is a process that requires the participation of many individuals and it also needs patience on the part of those who are in the forefront of the process because a truly shared vision takes time to emerge. To emphasize the participativeness of a shared vision Schmuck and Runkel (1994:57) stated that a shared vision emerges from a coherent process of reflection and sustained conversation. Schmuck and Runkel (1994:58) who stated that vision is the key ingredient of participation and developing a clear vision, devising a strategy to achieve the vision all requires a collaborative and integrated approach (Chapter 2). Ndhlovu *et al.* (1999:16) claimed that the envisioning process is inclusive of all members at all levels and is ongoing in the sense that members are supposed to keep on dreaming about positive things they would love to see in their organization in future.

5.7 “A SCHOOL IS NOT A SECLUDED ISLAND...”: SYSTEMS THINKING

The response clearly indicated that a school cannot operate and survive without the support of community members and other stakeholders in its external environment for the school gets its financial, material and human resources from its external environment. One respondent explained the interdependence and interrelatedness of a school to the external environment using the analogy of a baby that is attached to her mother through the umbilical cord. This idea exhorts us, the people involved with management, to look at school not as an isolated entity but rather to see it in terms of its relation with the larger environment outside it. It is for this reason that Moloji (2002:54) pointed out that it is not possible to understand any part of the school without reference to its interwoven, systemic nature. The point raised by the respondents was that a school is by its nature a social organization and the reason for its existence is to serve the needs of the community in its external environment. One of the respondents who happened to be a community member (Mr. J) put it categorically as follows: “Schools were built for us and there is no way we can be excluded from something which is ours. If we are excluded from schools, then there is no need for them to exist. They exist for us” (Chapter 4, page 82).

Moloji (2002:3) in an attempt to illustrate the interconnection between schools and their broader external environments posited as follows: “Every organization whether private or public operates within a specific environment and that environment influences the activities and decisions taken inside the organization.” The point of argument from the respondents was that schools as learning institutions are organizations where decisions must constantly be made and remade to respond to changing circumstances and in order to ensure that such decisions are relevant and appropriate constant interaction with the members of the community outside the school is essential. This interaction process necessitates the use of feedback to keep the community members and stakeholders informed about the activities and programs of the school. Van der Westhuizen (1996:110) stated that feedback is necessary in order to ensure that the school remains on track with the needs and demands of the external environment. Van der Westhuizen explained that feedback is information from the external environment about the school’s performance and it usually gives an

indication of whether or not the people outside the school are satisfied with the operation of the school (Chapter 2).

One of the respondents (Mr. S) complained bitterly during interviews about principals who manage schools as if they are running their own business because they do not bother themselves about keeping members of the public informed about the operation of their schools. As a result it is possible to find schools where members of the community are completely ignorant or have no idea about what is happening inside their schools (Chapter 4, page77). One could pose a question as to what a school can do to ensure that it gets regular feedback from its surrounding community. The response is simply that the school should learn to operate like a system with penetrable boundaries that allows free flow of information and exchange of ideas and knowledge between itself and its outer environment and the principal himself should create an enabling environment and an open platform where community members and stakeholders can express their views freely without the fear of being ridiculed or rejected.

An enabling environment in this case means that the principal could hold regular parents' meetings to brief members of the community about the school's operation and even invite their comments and advice. In addition to this, the school could issue quarterly reports to the members of the public, informing them about the progress being made at the school and also ask for suggestions for improvement. I must however, hasten to acknowledge the fact that when teachers interact with members of the community they create a context in which members of the public are able to identify with the school and with everything that happens within the school. Through such an interaction, parents and teachers learn from each other and make efforts to work together and solve problems together. In support of the interactive relationship between the school and the community Moloi (2002:4) stated: "To sustain your development and growth as an educator and in order to regenerate yourself you have to be aware and interact with your environment all the time." Moloi further argued that in order to succeed in connecting with the external environment you must be able to perceive continual change and uncertainty and to develop ways of experimenting with possible responses to change and uncertainty. Almost 63, 2% of the respondents confirmed the idea that a school, which values its relationship with the communities

outside is capable of achieving outstanding performance through collaborative practices.

The point raised by respondents above brings to mind what Senge calls systems thinking which exhorts us as managers and educators of schools to shift from seeing elements, structures, and functions to seeing the process and interrelationships thereof. Senge (1990:112) stressed the idea that one is not able to have a better understanding of a phenomenon like a school unless one looks at it in relation to its larger external environment. Senge teaches us as managers and educators of schools that we need to see our schools as systems that within themselves consist of different pieces with each piece interacting and affecting the others. As a result it becomes essential that teachers should connect and relate the results they get in their schools with what they have done because in terms of systems thinking nothing happens in isolation but rather everything occurs in relation to other factors around it. The school is no exception to this. The idea expressed by 62,3% of the respondents showed clearly that for learning to be effective at schools it must be undertaken in an ongoing relationship with parents, learners and the broader community. One of the respondents (Mr. S) who happened to favor the idea of parents and stakeholders' involvement in schools expressed his opinion as follows: "If learners see their parents frequently at schools they stop misbehaving and instead commit themselves to their school work" (Chapter 4, page 76).

One could perhaps ask the question as to what challenges does systems thinking present to today's principals and teachers. The idea of systems thinking as reflected in the responses of the research participants calls on us as principals and teachers of schools to acquire a clearer picture of the political, economic, social, technological and cultural world outside our schools and realize how this impacts on our work as teachers. A more pressing challenge is for us as teachers to move away from functioning as individuals in competition with one another. We should rather collaborate more often because our problems as teachers cannot be solved in isolation. Moloi (2002:62) in support of the idea I have expressed above, stated that in order for teachers to be able to address their current and future challenges they need to be drawn into partnership with parents and other stakeholders. One of the respondents interviewed (Mr. N) highlighted the fact that some schools in the Eastern Cape are

currently dysfunctional because the idea of entering into partnership with parents has not yet dawned in the minds of some principals. The respondent stated that these schools are at present experiencing learner-disciplinary problems and teachers seem to be failing in dealing with the problem because principals of these schools operate to the exclusion of parents and other stakeholders (Chapter 4, page 73).

One of the respondents who happened to be a teacher in the school under study expressed concern about the fact that teachers at schools still present knowledge to learners in cubbyholes. There is no integration of any kind and each teacher works in his own little corner without sharing ideas and views with other colleagues. The whole process is fragmented and there seems to be no co-operation between the different activities. As a result the efforts of teachers to improve the culture of learning and teaching bear no fruit. Teachers who work in isolation from each other are in disregard of Senge's assertion that schools are organizations in which all aspects of school life are in continuous interaction and interplay (Senge 1990:82). Molo (2002:54) reminded us as teachers that: "...we need to be aware of the interdependence of members within the school and of the school with the larger environment". Teachers need to adopt a holistic approach when looking at schools. They need to understand the fact that outside forces impact on what happens within schools and as a result the decisions taken at school level are bound to be affected by educational policy and by social, economic technological, political as well as legal processes that form the context within which schools function. It is for this reason that Davidoff and Lazarus (2002: 4) stated: "Whether a school exists in the midst of an informal settlement, a working class area, a rural or urban area... that environment has an impact on the life of that school" (Chapter 2).

5.8 "ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE TO REMOVE TENSIONS"

There was a general agreement among the respondents that participative management is able to take root in an atmosphere that is free from tensions, an atmosphere that is characterized by openness, trust, proper communication and mutual understanding among members. Such a tension free atmosphere cannot just come into being by itself, it has to be made to exist and then nurtured. Views expressed by research participants reflected that one way of creating a peaceful and tension free atmosphere

is by adopting a culture of debating and discussing issues so as to remove confusion and misunderstanding that might be existing among members. Engaging in dialogue is about open communication in which teachers exhibit trust, honesty, integrity and transparency. Kaura (2004:11) defined communication as “...the exchange and sharing of information, attitudes, ideas and emotions.” Without proper and clear lines of communication, members in an organization would not know exactly what to do and what is required of them and in a situation of that kind one cannot expect effective and successful participation to occur. Similarly in a school that is always ravaged by conflicts and quarrels, more time is spent on resolving conflict than on ensuring that participation is made effective and successful. This makes communication and a tension free atmosphere the most essential requirements for effective implementation of a participative approach.

Responses pointed to the fact that team learning at schools start with dialogue where members of a team make their own individual thinking clear to other members. Literature on communication skills attests to the fact that even the discipline of teaming itself involves mastering dialogue and discussion, which are the two distinct tools that teams use for conversing. When teachers are engaged in a dialogue they adopt a non-judgmental and co-operative approach to solving their problems and those of their learners. Moloji (2002:57) advised about the importance of dialogue as follows: “If you learn how to use the discipline of dialogue, it will help you to improve your understanding of yourself and to get a picture of your strengths and areas of weakness because you learn how to listen to what others say about you.” Dialogue can be utilized in schools to establish a better, deeper understanding of colleagues, learners, parents and other people who have contact with the school.

The turbulent environment in which schools find themselves today requires that teachers should learn to talk together, to reflect in and on their practices and to think together in an effort to build vibrant and effective schools that value the principle of participation. Again on this point Moloji (2002:58) suggested as follows: “If we as educators can learn to talk and listen to each other we shall develop a mutual bond and be able to create a co-operative and participative learning environment.” Participation includes collective thinking and collective thinking is impossible without

discussion and dialogue whilst reflection is of no value unless its outcomes are meaningfully deliberated.

Subordinates have a tendency of suppressing their feelings when they are confronted with contentious issues but the idea of engaging in dialogue presents an opportunity for those hidden feelings to surface in order to challenge ways of working that are based on the justification that “it has always been done this way”. The findings revealed that the practice of debating issues makes it possible for individuals in the schools to understand or gain clarification on the perspectives and viewpoints of others. In this way the individual’s unspoken assumptions become shared assumptions with shared meanings and teachers are thus able to adopt common points of focus. It is for this reason that Moloi (2002:72) claimed that dialogue is essential as a vehicle for sharing thinking patterns among members and as a result the thoughts and emotions of each member become known to other members. This has the effect of promoting genuine participation by members since members become open to one another as a result of talking together. Moloi (2002:73) pointed out that it is through engagement in dialogue that misunderstandings and misinterpretations between parents, educators, learners and stakeholders can be cleared and involvement is therefore enhanced.

During dialogue extreme views may be stated but it should be acknowledged that this “heat” and instability is what should be occurring in order that the fragmentation that has been hidden can surface. It helps if a manager allows the subordinates to “let off steam” so that thereafter they can participate genuinely without any hidden feelings that could be a hindrance to their participation. Moloi (2002:76) pointed out that it is in dialogue that individuals strive to make their premises and interpretations clear and develop conclusions that are testable.

5.9 “ADOPTING POSITIVE MENTAL MODELS TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATION”

Responses indicated in no uncertain terms that for participative management to be successful requires that the people should change their attitudes, learn to break with the past and venture into the future. I have stated elsewhere in this study that participation is a change process that came along with the new democratic dispensation in our country, South Africa. For any change process to be successful, it is essential that people who are involved and are to be affected by the change need to adapt their mindsets and adopt positive attitudes that would make them receptive to change. This is in line with what Senge (1990:13) called “metanoia” by which he means changing our mindsets as human beings in order to be able to think differently. The idea of change starts in the mind and it is our thinking patterns as humans that determine whether we accept or reject change. These thinking patterns are what Senge (1990:16) referred to as mental models.

Senge (1990:18) claimed that mental models are the images or assumptions that we carry in our minds as humans about ourselves and about other people. Moloi (2002: 44) asserted that mental models are the conceptual and operational representations that people develop while they interact with other people either at school or in other complex systems. In simple terms mental models are our ways of thinking as human beings. What is worth noting here is the fact that sometimes if these mental models are negative ones they can limit and prevent people’s adaptation to change. In learning organizations that promote participation these thinking patterns are freely shared, rigorously scrutinized and revised at the personal, team and organizational levels. One would be correct to say that mental models determine what people see and how they act as a result of their thinking. For instance a principal who has developed positive mental models about the involvement of parents and stakeholders would in his mind see parents and stakeholders as people who are capable and valuable and will as a result of that thinking create enabling conditions for their effective participation. Christie (2001:78) remarked as follows:” Our mental models influence how we see our learners and their parents and it is important that we continually examine our mental models to avoid being limited in our ways of

thinking”. Haines further argued that the quality of our thinking as teachers makes tremendous impact on how we facilitate participation in our schools. It is for this reason that earlier in this chapter I pointed to the significance of having a shared vision that serves as an important undertaking in creating a context for understanding each other’s way of thinking so that members can together strive for school effectiveness and success.

One of the respondents (Mr. S) pointed out that it is extremely difficult to change the mindset of a person who has internalized ideas because those ideas have become part of his/her personality as an individual. Mr. S expressed his opinion as follows, “You cannot teach an old dog new tricks” (Chapter 4, page 78). However, the same Mr. S acknowledged the fact that in order to succeed in changing an individual’s way of thinking one would have to exercise patience and tolerance. Because people have different thinking patterns it is possible that the way one teacher sees a situation in his school will differ from how the next teacher sees the same situation in the same school. Mental models strongly influence how an individual teacher perceives and acts in relation to specific situations in the school. This explains why different people have different interpretations and perceptions about participative management. For instance one would get different responses from teachers concerning the following questions. (a) What is your understanding of participation? (b) How do you see the role of the principal in a participative system? (c) How can you ensure that participation is implemented in your school? Teachers would give different responses to these questions because although they observe the same phenomenon, namely participation, they pay attention to different details. Clearly then it becomes imperative for one to continually evaluate and assess one’s mental models through engaging in sustained discussions and debates in which one makes his/her thoughts and views known to other members and allows other members to scrutinize and validate his/her thinking patterns.

Learning to question or assess one’s mental models makes it easier for one to explore and talk openly about his/her thoughts without being defensive. I believe that if we as teachers want to genuinely transform our schools into participative learning institutions we need to do away with old or outdated mental models so that we can be able to define our new roles. In many instances old models inhibit one’s reception to

change because they deal mostly with obsolete processes. Our schools are today engulfed in a galloping change and this of necessity puts pressure on us as teachers to adopt positive mental models so that we are able to understand the world differently and also able to open up our minds to new changes. One of the respondents (Mr. S) remarked about change as follows:” Me, I believe if you do not want to change, change will change you because it is inevitable and it will happen whether you like it or not” (Chapter 4, page 78).

It is important to realize that the way one thinks can either motivate or inhibit one’s reception to new changes. Moloji (2002:62) confirmed this point when she stated:” How one sees himself, others and the world around him is determined largely by his mental models”. This assertion points to the fact that even the way the principal thinks of parents and stakeholders will determine the extent to which he allows them to participate in school matters. This idea finds support in Senge’s statement that:” Mental models encompass one’s belief system and the level to which a principal is prepared to accept parents as equal partners in the management of a school are significantly influenced by the magnitude of the principals’ mental model.” Senge (1990:19) further explained that mental models (thinking patterns) evolve as each member interacts with other members and with the organization thus resulting in how he sees and describes other members in the organization. Senge advised that for a school to become a participative learning institution it must learn to overcome the fear or anxiety that prevents its members from challenging established ways of thinking and doing. This can only occur if members in the school learn to adopt positive mental models that would motivate them to see things in new perspectives, for it is only positive ideas that can survive scrutiny and prove useful in the face of challenges. The ever-changing environments in which schools operate require principals whose thinking patterns are flexible and are able to withstand scrutiny. I believe strongly that for schools to become participative organizations it would require that school managers themselves should shift to new mental models that promote co-operation, involvement, as well as transparency among members; they should break ties with old, outdated thinking patterns that encourage individuality, separateness and top down approaches.

5.10 BENEFITS DERIVED FROM PARTICIPATION

It transpired from the findings that 75% of the respondents shared the view that on comparative basis, participative management has more advantages than disadvantages (Chapter 4, page 56). The respondents pointed to a number of benefits that accrue from adopting a participative approach of which the most dominant view was that it results in good and positive interpersonal relations among staff members of the school. In a school that values participation one would find that a warm and friendly atmosphere prevails and such a welcoming atmosphere has the positive effect of boosting the morale of teachers so that they could commit themselves to achieving the school's objectives.

Mr. L who strongly supports the idea of keeping harmonious relations among members added his voice as follows: "When you are happy at work you are not afraid to take new initiatives...you simply do what you think is good for the school" (Chapter 4, page 80). This statement by Mr. L indicates that good interpersonal relations are a key to promoting co-operation, involvement and it fosters that sense of unity among members. Respondents stress the fact that without harmonious relations existing among members one cannot expect members to be able to give of their best at work and contribute positively to the growth and development of the school. This view is in line with the idea expressed by French and Bell (1995:19) who claimed that participation is a powerful elixir that improves individual and organizational performance (Chapter 2).

A collegial and cordial atmosphere encourages free interaction, sharing of ideas and knowledge among members and in this way one finds a bond of friendship developing between those inside and outside the school. This confirms Fullan's view that any innovations and improvements inside the school must be supported by sources outside the school (Fullan 2000:45). With harmonious relations among members, trust and transparency exist because everything is brought into the open, debated and clarified so as to remove any misunderstanding and suspicions that might exist among members. Warm and friendly relations promote the spirit of togetherness, which leads to the provision of better solutions to problems and acceptance of decisions by members.

Mr. N explained what happens in a school where members are always at loggerheads with one another as follows: “You find teachers backbiting one another; more time is spent on resolving conflicts than on promoting involvement of members in school matters” (Chapter 4, page 75). The scenario given by Mr. N above is the antithesis of what should be occurring in a participative organization where every member feels trusted, valued and is also given recognition for his contribution to the school. Members who are given a chance to participate in the management of their school feel empowered and as a result they are always willing and prepared to accept responsibility for their actions. Smith (2003:24) claimed that an empowered member understands and acknowledges the fact that he cannot do everything on his own but rather that he needs to build on the collective energies of others so as to create something far more than an individual effort can achieve (Chapter 2) and that reflects synergy. This is in congruence with the view expressed by Mr. L who claimed that by opening up an opportunity for participation principals would be building up the self-confidence and self-esteem of their teachers (Chapter 4, page 82).

In terms of McGregor’s theory *Y every individual has the potential and capability to grow and develop and all that is required is for the manager to nurture and create an enabling environment in which those innate capabilities can be realized. Participation allows for those hidden or untapped talents to be unleashed so that they can be utilized for the good of the organization. Mr. L warned that principals who do not offer an opportunity for staff members to participate must know that they are stifling the potential of those teachers (Chapter 4, page 80). The message here is simply that the more a principal opens up participation to his staff members, the more they will develop and learn to co-operate and be involved.

Moloi (2002:40) claimed that the essential tools for starting on the journey to establishing a participative learning institution are one’s will and motivation. However, Moloi further advised that for any school manager who wants to transform his school into a participative learning organization, it is essential that he asks himself the following questions and the answer to these questions will indicate whether the change process will be effective or not. To assess if the change process can work for his school or not the school manager should ask himself these questions (a) Why do I

need to transform the school? (b) What resources are available in the school to enable the transformation? (c) What is the nature of working relationships among the staff members? (d) What communication strategies are used in the school? (e) Do I as a principal allow broad participation in decision-making? If the principal is able to find genuine and positive answers to these questions then it would mean participation can work effectively in his school and the school would then be in a position to reap the benefits associated with higher involvement.

However, I must hasten to highlight the fact that when one talks of the successful implementation of a participative approach, the issue of organizational culture comes into play. For instance 62.3% of the respondents attested to the fact that successful implementation of a participative approach depends largely on “how we do things around here” and that is their core culture. Schein (1992:62) defined the core culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that are invented, discovered or developed by a group as it learns to cope with the problems of external adaptations and internal integration and that have worked well enough to be considered valid (Chapter 2). These beliefs, assumptions and attitudes that Schein talked about could to a large extent determine whether members of an organization are prepared and willing to make change work for them. In a school that has a strong toxic culture that is not responsive to change, one cannot expect the idea of participation to easily take root, particularly if for a long time participation has not been part of the way of doing things in the school. In a case like that the benefits of participation could as well be forfeited.

5.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discussed the themes that emerged during data analysis. The themes looked into different aspects of participative management, raised by the research participants themselves. My idea of discussing the themes was to add more flesh to statements made by respondents and also to interpret these statements in the light of established theories of management. During the discussions I drew information from existing literature on management (Chapter 2) to support the views expressed by the respondents and also to strengthen their points of argument. In the next chapter I will

give a summary of the main findings and make my personal recommendations regarding participative management. I will also highlight the potential value of the study with a view to indicating how the study itself could contribute to the body of knowledge on participative management.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I made an in depth discussion and interpretation of the findings with a view to making the responses of my research participants more meaningful, more sensible and clearer. The discussions were based on the themes that were identified during data analysis.

In this chapter I will present a summary of my findings by indicating the conclusions I have been able to draw from the findings. I will also make my own personal recommendations on participative management. Suggestions for further research will form part of this chapter and I will also highlight the potential value of the study.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

I begin the summary of the study by drawing the attention of the reader to the most important aspects that were exposed by the study. Those aspects will be dealt with under one sub-heading namely participation as a controversial issue.

6.2.1. Participation: A controversial issue

The respondents have expressed their opinions on how they see and perceive participative management. It surfaced in many of the participants' comments that involving members and delegating duties and responsibilities to subordinates was the core meaning of participation. The dominant view seemed to be that for any form of participation to be meaningful and effective it should be done in accordance with members' competence and capabilities. However, the study revealed that sometimes members can abuse the idea of participation by using it to achieve their own selfish ends instead of participating with a view to improving the operation of the

organization. This implies that managers of educational institutions should guard against such things when allowing participation to take place. One other idea exposed by the study was the fear experienced as a result of participation. Those in authority see power sharing as something that has come to reduce their power and that would in the end lead to power being taken by subordinates.

The findings also brought to the fore the fact that participation does not always mean consulting every member on everything because such a practice would be difficult if not impossible to do, particularly in big organizations. This means that in urgent matters those in top management would have the right to take decisions without involving everybody. On the other hand, participation was perceived by some respondents as something that can lead to a state of confusion in the sense that even those who do not have the ability and potential become part of decision-making.

6.3 POTENTIAL VALUE OF THE STUDY

The following points summarize the potential value of this study:

- I believe this study would provide policy makers in the DoE with a deeper understanding of how participative management is perceived and viewed by those who are supposed to implement it. As a result the DoE will be in a position to know about challenges around the implementation of participative management so that it can design appropriate strategies to deal with such challenges.
- The study has brought to the fore the controversy around participation so that those researchers who might be interested to delve deeper into the phenomenon of participative management, could know in advance what to expect.
- The study has also provided knowledge on the various ways of promoting participative management so as to equip those principals who might want to transform their schools into learning organizations that are advocated by Peter Senge.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

On reflecting upon my findings I decided on making the following recommendations:

- Participation should not be done just for the sake of doing it, but it must be meaningful and should aim at developing and empowering those involved.
- Principals should learn to view a participative approach in a positive light. They need not see participation as change that has come to disempower them or to make them lose control of schools. Principals ought to understand that participation exists in order to help minimize strenuous situations that are a result of non – involvement.
- It is possible for any school to be developed and transformed into a vibrant learning organization, but this can only occur if people inside and outside the school are willing and prepared to change their mindset and adopt thinking patterns that would make them flexible and responsive to new changes. Schools work the way they work because of the way people inside them think. This means that one does not transform a school by only putting new rules and structures in place, but by modifying those underlying beliefs and attitudes that shape the way members of the school think and act.
- Principals need to realize that in this turbulent environment in which schools operate, partnership with parents and stakeholders is essential for effective operation of schools. There are school activities in which parents can be involved without necessarily requiring them to have attained some levels of formal education.
- Effective communication is the key to removing misunderstanding and unnecessary tension that might hinder participation. It is only by establishing clear and open lines of communication that the principal will be able to understand the feelings and thoughts of his staff.

- Ensuring that good interpersonal relations prevail at all times among members is the secret behind successful organizations. Members cannot participate genuinely and be able to give of their best in an organization ravaged by conflicts.

6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

I believe that there is great need for follow up research since my study has left pending some aspects of participative management. Further research may look into the following aspects of participative management:

- Learners' involvement in decision making at High Schools. My study concentrated only on teachers and parents.
- How the lack of formal education among parents impacts on their involvement in school matters.
- The relationship between school culture and participation.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Ideally this study could have covered all the high schools that currently serve the Cala Community. However owing to time constraints, the study was confined only to one High School. This limits the extent to which the findings of the study can be generalized and extrapolated to other settings. My belief is that a wider and larger sample could have given me more generalisable results. However, it has not been the purpose of this study to achieve generalisability. My idea in this study was just to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of participative management (See Chapter 3 for more details on the limitations of the study).

Again gender is another limiting factor in this study. The fact that all my interviewees were males tended to introduce an element of bias in the sense that the views represented in the interviews are only those of men. Perhaps if I had interviewed

females they would have given me a different perspective of participative management.

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APPENDIX A

BOX 548

Elliot

5460

Dear Respondent

This is to kindly request you to participate in a research study intended to explore the perceptions and experiences of the various stakeholders about participative management.

The data you provide will help in a study towards the partial fulfillment of the requirements for a MEd programme at Rhodes University. The findings of the study will enable the Eastern Cape Department of Education to assess how far the transformation process has gone in our schools.

Anonymity of those who provide the data is fully guaranteed and I want to assure you that the data you will provide will not be used for any other purpose other than the research itself. Should you wish to withdraw from the study, you have all the rights to do so. If you decide to withdraw, you also have the right to demand that the data you had submitted be destroyed and not be used in the research. The data will be brought back to you for validation before being analyzed.

I wish to thank you most profoundly in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully

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STOFILE. A.M.

APPENDIX B

A QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE TEACHERS

You are kindly requested to answer every question in this questionnaire as honestly as possible. The data you provide will be used in a research study intended to investigate the perceptions and experiences the various stakeholders have about participative management. Kindly note that you need not write your name in any part of this questionnaire.

SECTION A

Listed below are questions that relate to Participative Management in the context of a school. Indicate whether you agree (YES) or you are not sure (NS) or you disagree (NO) with each question by putting a cross (X) in the space provided under your choice.

ITEM		YES	NS	NO
1.	Is the notion of Participative Management an idea that is feasible?			
2.	Does Participative Management mean that everyone must be consulted on every aspect of management?			
3.	Is it correct to view Participative Management as a threat to the powers of principals?			
4.	Does the leadership style of the principal determine the manner in which Participative Management is implemented at school?			
5.	Is it the responsibility of the SMT only to ensure that Participative Management is effected at school?			
6.	Is there any correlation between Participative Management and the culture of a school? (the way things are done)			
7.	Does Participative Management lead to the boost of staff morale?			
8.	Is transformational leadership a necessity for effective implementation of Participative Management?			
9.	Does Participative Management lead to stakeholders' involvement such as parents?			
10.	Does Participative Management make decision-making easier?			
11.	Is there any relationship between Participative Management and the academic performance of a school?			
12.	Does Participative Management result in improved interpersonal relations at school?			
13.	Is Participative Management the right way to go?			
14.	Do stakeholders need workshopping before being engaged in Participative Management?			
15.	Do schools that practise Participative Management encounter less conflict situations than those that do not?			
16.	Is there any correlation between Participative Management and the size of an organization?			
17.	Is Participative Management synonymous with laissez faire type of management?			
18.	Does Participative Management contribute to reducing management			

	stress on the principal?			
19.	Does Participative Management help develop the potential of individual staff members at school?			
20.	Does Participative Management have more advantages than disadvantages?			

SECTION B

Listed below are assumptions and beliefs that some people have about Participative Management. I gathered these ideas during an informal discussion I had with colleagues. Show whether you agree (3) or you are undecided (2) or you disagree (1) with each statement by putting a ring/circle around the number that indicates your choice e.g. (2)

ITEM	STATEMENT	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE
1.	Participative Management is aimed at reducing the powers that principals have been enjoying all this time.			
2.	Participative Management delays implementation of decisions since it requires that everyone must be consulted before decision is taken.			
3.	Participative Management has come to guard against the dictatorial practice of principals.			
4.	Participative Management means that there is equality of everybody and therefore no one is accountable to anyone.			
5.	Participative Management is a process that will take a very long period to be realized.			
6.	Participative Management is more likely to succeed in urban schools than in rural schools.			
7.	Participative Management gives members a feeling of ownership of the organization.			
8.	Participative Management cannot succeed if there is no shared vision by the organization members.			
9.	Participative Management can be more effective if it is driven by organization members themselves rather than being imposed from outside.			
10.	Participative Management reduces resistance to change			
11.	Top management should be the driving force in order for participative management to be successful .			
12.	Participative Management does not absolve the school principal form accountability.			
13.	Participative Management can be detrimental to			

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(C) What do you think are possible threats to the implementation of Participative Management?

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(D) What are the strategies that can be used to make Participative Management more successful at schools?

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THANK YOU

APPENDIX C

1. What is your understanding of the concept “participative management”?
2. Could you explain, giving examples how you implement Participative Management at this school?
3. What obstacles did you encounter when you were implementing Participative Management and how did you over come them?
4. What advice would you give to those principals who are still struggling to make Participative Management work in their schools?
5. What would you recommend as the best remedy for making Participative Management effective in schools?
6. What are your views on Participative Management in general?