

**Senior Management Teams and School Management Practices : A Case
Study in KwaZulu-Natal**

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DECLARATION

I, Mahendra, R. Jeawon, declare that the contents of this study represents the author's own research and writing, and that no source material has been falsely used or unacknowledged.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I DEDICATE THIS WORK TO MY SISTER ROSHEENA.

WITHOUT HER I WOULD NOT HAVE SUCCEEDED IN ATTAINING MY GOALS IN LIFE. SHE IS AND WILL ALWAYS BE MY PILLAR OF STRENGTH AND SOURCE OF INSPIRATION.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Terms used in the thesis:

HoDs: head of departments

SMTs: School management teams or senior management teams

SBM: school based management

DOE: Department of Education

KZNDOE: KwaZulu Natal Department of Education

HOA: House of Assembly

DET: Department of Education and Training

KZG DEC: KwaZulu Government Department of Education and Culture

SAPS: South African Protection Services

SADTU: South African Democratic Teachers Union

NATU: National Teachers' Union (based in KwaZulu Natal)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Aims and objectives of the study

The present research project will attempt to investigate and identify Senior Management Team practices that contribute to higher success in schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal. It will also investigate attitudes, ideas and opinions of senior school managers towards a wide variety of ways and means through which successful and effective school management teams need to operate.

One of the key purposes of the present research is to identify specific interventions that can be deemed necessary to improve the quality and delivery of services provided by the School Management Teams and educators in general, so that learners will improve their scholarly performance at all levels.

Such a study cannot ignore a number of crucial aspects of school performance such as the physical infrastructure deficiencies and their impact on scholarly performance. The research will attempt to answer a number of key questions:

* The level of involvement of stakeholders in decision making.

*Skills transfer at all levels and especially within the SMTs themselves and their role in the school's successful and effective performance.

* What are considered the key weaknesses in SMT functions and their role in school performance?

*The knowledge levels amongst SMT members regarding the new curriculum that will be introduced in 2006.

1. 2 Education, legacies and realities

The key to these questions both in terms of educational principles and in terms of social policy imperatives lay in both the present and the historical legacies of our education system.

One of the most fundamental tenets of our country's constitution is the right to education. Thus Section 29. (1). (a). Of the South African Constitution stipulates that:

“Everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education.”

This article is in complete accordance with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that also guarantees the right to basic education, when it states that:

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory...”

It becomes clear, then, that in both legal and humane grounds that the above clause of our constitution compels the state to implement policies that will guarantee this right to education.

Given the inequalities inherent in South African society, even after the democratic order, one would expect that things would be more equitable at

various levels of education, especially in the rural areas that had faced the greatest negligence of apartheid colonialism.

The state and the Department responsible for the education of the country's youth, the Department of Education (DOE) is obligated to rectify the imbalances of the past and some of its crucial responsibilities are:

- To provide adequate facilities for schools (electricity, water toilets classrooms etc),
- To equip all educators with the necessary skills that will allow them to carry out their duties and responsibilities adequately , and
- To structure a national curriculum that is sustainable, scientific and in accordance to the needs and skills demands of the country.
- To increase the optimum maximisation of human resources so that the education system in the country will improve the level of the learners to higher achievements.

The last mentioned priority is instrumental in the efforts to elevate educational standards, especially amongst the most disadvantaged sections of the population, the African communities. The DOE has thus identified a number of capacity-building programmes that will enhance and strengthen the management of existing resources.

There has been a long and protracted debate regarding the fundamental human and constitutional right to basic education as the first major step in elevating African communities and defeating the apartheid legacy , filled with inequalities, under-resourced African and Black schools generally .It needs to be said, however , that after eleven years of political liberation , the apartheid legacy lives on , especially in the rural areas, which faced the greatest inequalities in the post-1948 period.

This does not mean that all layers of government , both national and provincial have not spent billions of rands and adopted programmes aimed at redressing apartheid's devastation. There have been hundreds upon hundreds of schools built and furnished, access roads built, and new curricula have been explored and implemented that will definitely make a difference in the future. There has been for example a healthy debate on the nature and importance of the Outcome Based Education (OBE) curriculum that has been adopted as the result of research and implementation of a new way of thinking.

On the other hand, there has been serious evidence that pinpoint to a few serious problems facing schools, management teams, communities and learners. One of the most important is that the much celebrated free education, as guaranteed by the constitution is not in fact a reality, but large numbers of learners who cannot afford to pay the fees are either forced to leave school or have their results withdrawn, their parents household goods attached by lawyers and other similar situations (**TRIBUNE HERALD 10/7/2005**).

The proper and efficient utilisation of the educational human resources is the ultimate responsibility of the Department of Education and its relevant departments and sections. It is up to these organs for example to ensure that SMTs at all schools in the province, from the affluent suburbs of Durban North to the rural hills of uMsinga possess the correct and appropriate skills to provide effective service delivery to our young people, their parents and the community at large.

For these reasons the present research will examine and analyse existing and potential senior management practices as a guide to the future, because a comparative analysis and understanding of the effective functions of SMTs is of great importance to the success of schools, especially previously disadvantaged schools in the KZN province.

1.3 Hypotheses

A number of hypotheses will be tested in the context of the present study:

- * There is divergence of opinions amongst SMT members regarding the involvement of all stakeholders in decision making.
- *Skills transfer has been absent within SMTs themselves.
- * There is divergence of opinions amongst SMT members regarding leadership skills needed for the school's successful and effective performance.
- *Weaknesses in SMT functions leads to poor school performance.
- * There is a diversity of ideas and perceptions within SMTs themselves regarding weaknesses that have negative effects on school performance.
- *There is a general lack of knowledge amongst SMT members regarding the new curriculum that will be introduced in 2006.

1.4 School Management in the present project

School management is a vital cog in the efforts of the National Government to enhance effective service delivery at all levels. The shifting of responsibilities in terms of SMTs from the central government to provincial governments means that in a short period of time, these will move ultimately to schools, whereby school management and the community will be instrumental in the complete running of the schools. This means that the ultimate success or failure at school level will be the effect of efficiency or not of all role players and stakeholders, spearheaded by the SMT.

Such a final move will signify the maturing of the decision taking process at all levels, as the key decisions that affect the lives and educational achievements of the learners are outside the sphere of the state and education department bureaucracy, and the tentacles of the circuit red tape, and in this scenario a more or less School Based Management (SBM) will be introduced. Such a system in the final analysis will be the one that will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a particular school and provide the opportunity for its leadership to adopt a hands down approach in order to iron out the weaknesses and build on the existing strengths.

It is sincerely hoped that the present research project will enhance our knowledge regarding problems and possibilities amongst SMTs at schools and conclusions will be drawn regarding the implementation of various measures that will enhance solid school management in the future. It is hoped that the research will shed light to practices and realities related to the functions and structures of Senior Management Team and the practices adopted by them in their performance of duties and responsibilities.

The present research project also attempts to establish whether the lack of facilities at a school bears consequences for its success or failure.

The first chapter identified the aims and objectives of the present study and the context within which the project will be undertaken.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

There cannot be a proper scientific analysis of the topic under investigation without a brief, but substantive, description of the crucial realities of education in the Province of Kwa-Zulu Natal. This description will set the social context within which our research is located . The KZN Department of Education (KZNDOE) is the largest provincial Department in the country in with 74000 educators, approximately 2.9 million learners and 6000 schools (Kwa-Zulu Natal Budget Debates 2004-2005).

The legacy of apartheid colonialism had very serious negative effects on the efforts of the newly installed democratically elected provincial governments that inherited a great number of problems and realities badly in need of transformation: After the 1994, the IFP led KZN government inherited education departments with the following problems

1. The amalgamation, merger and transformation of four education departments in the province namely the House Of Representatives (for coloureds), House of Delegates (for Indians), Department of Education and Training, and the Kwa-zulu government led department (for Africans).
2. High illiterate rate amongst large sections of the population , including children and youths at schooling age
3. Vast shortage of classrooms especially in African Schools both in urban and rural areas
4. Shortage of basic infrastructure like water, sanitary, electricity, laboratories and libraries in most African schools both in the urban and rural areas
5. Under qualified and unqualified educators
6. High educators learner ratio ego the school teachers taught more than 100 learners in a class

7. Violence and crime in schools
8. The discredited Bantu education curricula for African school
- 9 Lack of involvement of parents in their children education
- 10 Lack of programmes, in early childhood education.

(Kwazulu Natal Budget Debates 2001-2004)

Another major problem faced by the KZN DOE was the political infighting between the major political forces in the province, the INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY and the AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS that led to the continuous substitutions of Education Ministers in the Province. Thus since 1994 there have been six Ministers(P. Zulu, E. Nkosi Shandu, Faith Gasa, G. Ndabandaba and N Singh and the present one , I.Cronje, an ANC Member of Parliament). Such a reality has created a certain degree of instability and has led to low levels of service delivery in KZN.

The National Government is the kingpin in providing the laws and rules dictating the pace of educational reforms and transformation, as education is a national competency. All the laws, rules and regulation regarding education, emanate from the National Parliament. In the process of implementation of the national legislation, the province of KZN has been naturally affected by the changes in the educational landscape in South Africa initiated by the first National Education Minister Professor S. Bhengu and the second, Professor Kader Asmal.

Both of them were responsible for a number of policies and initiatives that were introduced with a complete transformation of education in mind:

- a) A National Education Policy which regulates education in the country

- b) The South African Schools Act which provides for *governance* procedure in schools
- c) The Curriculum 2005 which had Outcomes Based Education as it's a vehicle of delivery
- d) The Educators Employment Act, which regulates the working conditions of educators.

In the process of transformation based upon these fundamental laws and initiatives, it has been reported that there have been several preparations and foundation stones in the province, which can be described in brief as follows:

* C2005 – RNCS

The Foundation phase and Intermediate phase of Curriculum 2005 are reported to be in the path to success, there is evidence of a process of implementation of RNCS. There is evidence that senior phase educators are being trained as implementation begins next year.

* Compulsory Maths

The department has initiated a DINALEDI project that will turn schools into centres of excellence in Maths and Science and all schools that have been selected to kick-start the project are ready, while the educators are being trained for this project.

* Introduction of Isizulu

As from next year (2006) the isiZulu language will be introduced, and offered to all public schools in the province. This is part of transforming the schools to reflect the population dynamics and realities of the province.

There is a lot to be done in terms of a number of many burning issues in the province, which if they are not tackled heads on there is very little chance for success. Historically and at present Kwa-ZuluNatal is one of the four provinces identified to have poor physical infrastructure and lack of learning and teaching material. Some of the key problems that need to be tackled immediately and effectively are:

* Shortage of classrooms

This is evident in urban rural and farm schools which have multi classes in one building. The shortage in classrooms is estimated at 14 667 (Public Works 2005)

B. Poor Physical Conditions

Thirty two percent of schools have been judged to be in poor condition, many schools lack desks. In many cases, the infrastructure is beyond repair and needs to be demolished and replaced. Many of the schools in the rural areas are the most affected. These schools have inadequate facilities furniture and learner support material utilities (water, electricity and communication system) are either non- existence or grossly inadequate. The DOE (2003) for example reports that:

- 53% of schools have no telephone connection
- 56% of all schools are accessible only by footpaths or poor gravel roads
- 60% of schools have no power supply

- 34% of schools have no water
- 51% of schools have no library
- 85% of schools have no laboratories
- 75% of schools are without computers
- 34% of schools have no principal's office

In this area, the department is loosing the battle as 98% of their budget goods towards paying salaries and only 2% goes to capital expenditure (www.kzneducation.gov.za)

* The school fees

There is a serious problem of many young dropouts from schools because large numbers of learners fail to pay school fees and on top of that parents have to pay exorbitant prices for school uniform. The DOE has failed to solve the issue of school denying learners access if they cannot afford school fees, the confiscation of progress reports and in some cases, learners are not allowed to write exams.

*School Funding Norms and Standards

The schools are divided into sections 20 and 21 respectively and most poor schools fall under section 20, where the department allocates funds. The money is used for learner support material and to pay for other basic expenses in cured at schools. These funds are completely inadequate. In some schools in KZN up to 90% of this fund are used in paying services such as water and electricity as the government have failed to provide this for free as promised. Other huge amounts wasted on the irregular procurement procedures for section 20 schools, which sees stock being sold at three or four times more normal price.

*Safety

Crime in schools at KZN is high and takes different forms. Criminals rob educators in school premises. Cases of murder and assaults of educators and learners reported daily in newspapers. Schools are a very unsafe place in these days. It is widely accepted that the KZN DOE has failed dismally in providing safety and security in schools. There is a policy called Discipline, Safety and Security but has not been effective in the very few schools that implement it (Global Campaign for Education – SA- www.sadtu.org.za).

* Discipline

Discipline is lacking amongst both learners and educators. Corporal is still administered in schools. This has even resulted to the death of learners e.g. Phezulu High and Ndwedwe. The department have failed to stop educators from beating children and has not provided alternatives to corporal punishment. Educators are involved in unprofessional behaviour e.g. child abuse, rape, fraud etc.

*Late delivery

Stationery and books are delivered late to schools, even six month into the school year. This disturbs learning and teaching.

* Lack of capacity of SMTs

There is a lack of capacity of SMTs and there is a need for the department to urgently train all school managers. They need to be well vested with all the legislation policies and provisions so as to effect measurable changes in schools (Global Campaign for Education – SA- www.sadtu.org.za).

*Capacity of School governing bodies

Most SGBS are unable to perform the duties and responsibilities provided by South African Schools Act. Hence their contribution to school development is minimal. Nothing has been done to rectify the situation ([www.hsrc.org.za /education/kzn](http://www.hsrc.org.za/education/kzn))

* Skills Development

There is a shortage of skills, and an Audit needs to be conducted so that human resources can be re-skilled. In-service training and professional development have not been undertaken and there is a need for it to be prioritized.

School Nutrition

Poverty , unemployment and starvation force many learners to arrive at school hungry .It is necessary for the province's government Its DOE needs to ensure that nutrition programmes are provided for the needy. Corruption amongst service providers needs to be uprooted and it must introduce feeding scheme to secondary schools (Global Campaign for Education – SA www.sadtu.org.za).

Following the victory of the ANC in the KZN provincial elections in 2004 the ANC Minister of Education in the province government in the province have adopted the theme of “Getting Kwa-zulu-Natal Learning” and identified the following priority areas to be addresses immediately and effectively.

1. To break the lack of illiteracy amongst adults and youth by 2005
2. To make schools the center of community life
3. To end conditions of physical degeneration in KZN schools

4. To develop the professional equality of the educators
5. To ensure the success of active learning through OBE
6. To create a vibrant further education and training system (FET)
7. To equip youth and adults to meet the social and economic needs of the 21st century.

These are noble objectives and targets to be achieved, and this can only occur through cooperation, synergy and collective action of all stakeholders and role players.

Having examined briefly the context within which this project has been undertaken, let us examine the nuts and bolts of school management.

School management has been a relatively well researched topic in both educational and social and public policy fields. This is so because it has been widely accepted that it is a terrain of change and transformation that has the potential to change the whole face and future of a particular institution.

It has been internationally accepted that there is a very strong relationship between school management practices and learner performance at all levels (De Grauwe 2004:4).

Comparative analysis of such situations has demonstrated adequately that efforts to elevate school management practices have in most cases a very positive effect on scholar's performance and success levels. One of the leading African scholars on the subject, Akyeampong (2004) in his seminal work on the topic has recently indicated that the continuous improvement of management strategies leads to a very positive change in the school's organisational culture and structure, and enhances the school's relations with the community. This is

the result of communication efficiency that in most cases results from the decision-making authority of the SMT.

Such a positive process is further enhanced in cases where the school management leadership adopt transparent, accountable and participatory practices, where the management of the school communicates openly and honestly with all stakeholders and role players such as the learners, parents and the community at large. In such an eventuality, the day to day and long term functioning of a school becomes a collective responsibility of all stakeholders and role players (Akyeampong: 2004:11-12)

Transparency, accountability and autonomous decision making according to other researchers and commentators are important ingredients of success, but need to be treated as functional, rather than ideological prerequisites for future success. One of the “mild critics” of School Based Management, De Grauwe (2004), indicates that international comparative statistics show that one of the most crucial aspects of school success is not really management transparency, but the “sinking financial state of schools as institutions.

Such a position, purporting to “separate” the “ideological” from the “practical” has certain merit, as financial resources are crucial in the maintenance and success of schools as institutions of learning. It is a reality that the new neo-liberal trend sweeping the world at present dictates that there is always austerity in social services internationally, including education (Khumalo GN 2004, 2005). It is then, true, that management teams , throughout the world and in South Africa have to manage their schools in most cases through a limited budget , but it is a fallacy to believe that it is financial resources alone that dictate the pace of success or failure of a school.

It is De Grauwe (2004:11-13) himself the proponent of the “struggle” between the “ideological” and the practical” who readily accepts the crucial significance of

solid management and organisational efficiency of school teams in their quest for excellence in service delivery. He stresses, of course, the significance of financial resources as an inevitable ingredient of success, but he readily admits that solid management is the basis of a solidly-run school.

In reinforcing this line of thought he outlines several characteristics of a potentially successful school that in fact possess both “ideological” and “practical” elements:

- The school must be a democratic institution, which will give the opportunity to parents and educators to discuss debate and finally make collective and well thought decisions related to key educational issues of importance. Such issues can be related to choice of educators, codes of conduct, human resources utilisation, security issues and the like. Such democratically arrived decisions are unlikely to be not recognised as such in the process as all stakeholders and role players are involved in them.
- The decision-making structures need to realise the relevance and significance of past and present problems that need to be challenged, and hence relevant strategic and tactical policies can be adopted in the efforts to succeed in service delivery.
- A democratic, transparent and accountable process of decision making will be able to avoid the pitfalls of red tape and bureaucracy that stifles the process of service delivery. The cutting down of bureaucracy means that decisions taken democratically will be implemented without the delays of long processes. At present decisions such as these need to be examined and ratified by intermediary institutions, committees , district officers, inspectors DOE bureaucrats and the like. The result is that decisions taken democratically and can lead to success are stopped by a procrastinating bureaucracy.
- Management teams schools and educators need to be a part and parcel of the movement towards greater accountability. For this to succeed all these groups and individuals must have a greater say in the running of the system

at district and provincial level, but above all at community level. If all these stakeholders are an integral part of the running of the institution, this will make them more accountable to communities and customers in terms of service delivery.

- Democracy , accountability and transparency will most likely mean greater mobilisation of all stakeholders towards the financial development of the school , where educators, managers, parents and learners will in fact become instrumental in collecting funds , seek sponsors , mobilise their limited resources for the benefit of the school as a whole (De Grauwe: 2004)

It has been argued very strongly that comparisons between public and private sector entities can lead to false results. In both cases, however there are a number of comparative characteristics that can be utilised for the benefits. International research has shown that aspects and implementation of decentralisation in the private sector has led to increasing maximisation of profit and enhanced performance.

However such successes would be impossible unless accompanied by a number of crucial ingredients:

- Organisational changes and transformation.
- Communication and information efficiency.
- Maximum utilisation of all resources
- Solid knowledge management.
- Skills enhancement

In a nutshell it can be said without fear that there are several genuine similarities in the functional and structural sense, as well as the organisational set-up between SMTs and certain categories of the management of small and medium sized enterprises despite the fundamental difference of their outcomes and

outputs, whereby enterprises aspire to maximisation of profits while school management teams aspire to enhance educational standards.

It is in this context that the concept and experience of education management needs to be located and examined. Management per se is the combination of duties, responsibilities, processes and outcomes, but education management has something special about her because it is upon her that the foundations of a nation future will be built.

Education management is the process whereby resources are dialectically related to objectives that underline solid and efficient education” (Musaazi 1982). Education management permeates all levels of the establishment and hierarchy of the system in the country:

- National Department.
- Provincial Department.
- Circuit Offices.
- Inspectors.
- Districts.
- Areas.
- Schools.
- School management teams.

This means that educational management and its empirical ramifications is a very widely spread reality both in the sphere of theoretical abstract knowledge and in research practice. The mere fact that the main unit of investigation in terms of this research was the school does not diminish the enormity of the theoretical and empirical realities of education management in its totality.

It is widely accepted in international literature that senior management teams in education are synonymous with the concept of “professional development” in

institutions of learning. Hence senior management teams are directly associated with the application of principles of professional development, at all functional, structural and operational levels. This means that they need to apply these principles not only to themselves but also to their colleagues and all people, tasks, aims and objectives that they manage.

(Ramsey 1994).

It becomes obvious , then, that a wide array of duties and responsibilities are directly and inextricably linked with professional education management , such as the optimum utilisation of human and other resources, the acquisition and transfer of a wide variety of development skills (i.e. management training, financial and curriculum experience) and a host of others .

In fact it needs to be said clearly that one of the key components of the duties and responsibilities of SMTs is to encourage educators at all levels to improve their skills. This encouragement needs to be seen in the context of the reality that development and smooth running of the school does not depend not only on the SMTs, but is also based on the existing and future opportunities that both educators and managers are given in order to develop themselves, their knowledge and skills .

There is a wide array of departmental duty aspects and dynamics, which are considered of importance in terms of management competence such as:

*Decision making

*Staffing

* Human resource development,

*Delegation of duties

*Planning and strategic initiatives

* Leadership building

*Control, evaluation and feedback mechanisms

*Communication

*Budgeting

Dayaram (1988) in his analysis of school education management for Schools in Kwa-zulu Natal wrote that principals are school leaders whose responsibilities and duties revolve around the following key issues of school management:

- The development of concrete goals, clearly policies and strategically based directions.
- The organisation of the school based on a number of efficiently designed programmes that will be instrumental in accomplishing efficiency and success.
- The procurement, management and allocation of human and other resources.
- The establishment and maintenance of a scholastic and educational climate which will ultimately lead to personal and professional growth and development.
- The representation of the school in its dealings with the education authorities at all levels, as well as the community.

The above mentioned researcher indicated that one of the most important elements for future success at school level was the development, improvement and maintenance of solid of education management and the relationship between SMTs educators at all levels of the professional hierarchy. It was discovered educators felt more comfortable and performed better in schools where they felt that their contribution in education was appreciated.

International literature has shown conclusively that leadership styles and methods of educational management teams differ significantly.

Recent research has shown for example that leadership and management are instrumental in creating the ability within a school structure to retain numbers of learners within the system and providing a high level of education as aspired in the founding documents of our new democracy, such as the constitution of the country. High quality education of an equitable nature is the ultimate dream encapsulated in the Constitution of South Africa as well as in the hearts and minds of million of the poor and oppressed African children .

A recent path-breaking report on South African education states the following:

“The DOE knows that) in the key areas of learner access, school funding, teacher morale, and most urgently, quality education there are difficulties that are being experienced”

(Crain Soudien in Mail and Guardian 25/11 to 1/12/2005)

Inevitably, such difficulties can be seriously addressed successfully by solid educational management. It is instrumental to note that as the same report indicates in 1995 1 666 980 pupils enrolled in Grade 1, but in by 2001 only 932 151 had made it to Grade 7. This means that 734 829 learners were

unaccounted for. This means that most likely this staggering number had left the educational system.

The Dean of Education provided an explanation for such a drop out rate at the University of Pretoria, Professor Jonathan Jansen who said:

“On the one hand you insist people go to school, but then you don’t make it worth there while to be there because the quality is so poor”

Of course there is a wide array of deeply-rooted social and economic reasons for such a vast number of drop outs in early education, such as poverty, unemployment, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and rural realities, but it needs to be said that systemic and organisational problems endemic in the system can be counted as serious impediments to a solid and effective educational school system.

Leadership in education takes a wide variety of forms, as evident in international literature that has distinguished the following tenets associated with this phenomenon:

*** *Visionary Leadership***

Such leadership is characterised by a set of principles that they try to develop and instil on the school they lead. It is very important in periods of transformation, as in South Africa at present situations. In such a context the SMTs need to possess a progressive vision for excellence that will be underlined by clear goals that will be instrumental in transforming radically the existing realities and conditions.

*** *Authoritarian Leadership***

In such a leadership the main characteristic is that power and authority are concentrated in the hands of the Principal. This means that there is no participation, cooperation or synergy amongst stakeholders, but all decisions affecting the functions, structures and well being of the institution are made by the principal without no consultations, transparency or accountability. In such leadership dissent does not exist.

*** *Participative Leadership***

Participative leadership is characterised by democratic decision taking processes, led by the principal, and generally leads to transparency and accountability as by products of such a process. In the context of such leadership all members of staff, as well the leadership of key stakeholders and role players participate in debates and discussions regarding the present and the future of the school and have the freedom to voice their opinions, ideas and suggestions. The decision making process is participative, democratic and transparent, and it is more likely that the decisions will be respected and accepted by all participants.

*** *Laissez-Faire Leadership***

Keith (1992:65) has described laissez leadership style as one that gives the freedom to everyone involved to perform his/her duties and responsibilities according to their own understanding of educational dynamics and processes. It is a unique system in terms of both principles and implementation, but it is obviously prone to problems, as there is no cemented or widely accepted pre-determined plan of action agreed upon by leadership and/or stakeholders. Although it is widely accepted that such a leadership can stimulate creativity among educators and other stakeholders and role players such as community groups and learners, it can also lead to conflict and confrontation.

The chapter examined the South African educational context, with special reference to the problems facing the province of Kwa-zulu Natal Education Department, mainly as a result of the legacy of apartheid colonialism. School management was conceptualised in its local and international context and patterns of leadership were identified and analysed briefly.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The empirical component of such a project needs to be thoroughly planned and implemented, as it needs to be organised according to the existing resources of the researcher or the research team. In our case, the researcher has a full time occupation in the Kwa-zulu Natal Education Department and extremely limited financial resources that would allow him to expand his research horizons beyond what could be done. This empirical effort was planned with several key methodological realities in mind, and it followed the steps undertaken in a well-planned and thoroughly implemented scientific project.

Thus, the following steps were undertaken in the preparation and execution of the project:

* Literature review:

This was performed under the guidance of the researcher's supervisor. Although the researcher because of his long experience in a SMT had very strong ideas about the functions and realities of these teams. The literature review consisted of the study of articles, books, newspaper clippings and Internet search that opened new doors of knowledge and understanding of a number of complicated issues for the researcher. The importance of literature review has been emphasised by a number of scholars (Bailey 1978; Marsh 1982; Denzin 1995)

*Questionnaire construction:

Researchers in the social sciences still debate the differences and divisions underlying the significance, strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods (Agar 1986; Backstrom 1992; Gauri 1995)

It is important for the researcher to be able to understand the differences and significance of these methods when he/she undertakes a project. After careful consideration, it was decided that in the context of this thesis both quantitative and qualitative methods were to be employed. It was felt strongly that the two methods were to be used in such a way as to compliment each other. It was thought that the utilisation of such a “triangular” method would be beneficial in the improvement of the findings, and would enhance the objectivity of the project. Above all it would add a different, more complete dimension to the analysis of results and the study at large (Ott and Sheaffer 1971; Van Maanen 1983; Madenhal 1996)

Quantitative data was gathered directly from the questionnaires which were semi-structured. Qualitative data were derived from the open ended parts of the questionnaires.

The questionnaires tackled the following aspects of SMT leadership, as well as the reasons for success or failure of a particular school and its leadership team:

- * Demographic characteristics of the sample

- * Strengths of SMTs in their duties

- *The significance of the supervision of work

- * The role of leadership skills

- * The transfer of leadership skills

- * Leadership styles

- * Recruitment skills and knowledge

- * Strategic planning and organisation
- * Allocation of resources
- * Change in management structures
- * Influence of training initiatives
- * Reasons for good or bad performance of SMTs.

International researchers and theorists have accepted that the combination of qualitative and quantitative modes of research and analysis are both desirable and useful in the process of investigating and analysing social phenomena, and the educational sphere is no exception (Emerson 1983; De Vaus 1986; Denzin 1995).

* Sampling

Given the very limited financial resources at the disposal of the researcher, a limited number of schools were selected for this study. To have a provincially based project, coupled with a scientifically selected random number of schools would be very expensive.

For this reason 20 schools were selected randomly from the eThekweni municipality. It was decided that all schools would be selected through the use of area clusters (what is known as cluster sampling frame). The cluster sample is a probability sample that according to statistical and sampling theory gives an equal opportunity to all units within a confined geographical area to be selected (Madenhal 1971; Wax 1971; Marsh 1982; Emerson 1983; De Vaus 1986).

The eThekweni Districts were used as clusters, so it is evident that schools representing all social groups and classes were represented in the study. This also means that the majority of these schools are to be found in most disadvantaged African areas in the municipality.

The principal, deputy principals, HoDs, of each school were interviewed for the study. This means that the overall number of people interviewed was 60.

. * The interview process

Two postgraduate students in the Social Sciences from the University of Kwa-zulu Natal were employed part time to undertake the interviews, while the researcher himself carried out approximately 10 interviews in three schools and was responsible for the quality assurance of all completed questionnaire schedules. Check up visit was undertaken in respect of 7 schools by the researcher.

* The analysis of data

This was done manually and no tests of statistical significance were performed given the limited number of participants in the study. However, special emphasis was placed on the age variable as it was instrumental in the confirmation or not of one of the hypotheses set in the first chapter of the thesis.

*Limitations of the study

There were a number of limitations in the study. One of them was that the limitation of funds and time did not allow the researcher to expand the sampling frame to more rural areas. Although some of the schools selected in the sample were considered semi rural institutions it was felt that more rural schools should

be investigated as they are the most disadvantaged and still carry the burden of the apartheid legacy.

Another limitation was that the researcher himself was not always available at the interviews undertaken by the research assistants, and on a very few occasions the responses did not seem satisfactory. However, it must be stated that these were rare. Additionally, while many interviewees answered well and extensively in response to open-ended questions others did not provide detailed full and comprehensive answers for open-ended questions. Overall, however, the researcher felt satisfied with both the planning and implementation phase.

The chapter examined and described the methodological framework upon which the thesis will be based. He identified the various interrelated steps undertaken in the effort to present a thorough scientific analysis of the problem at hand.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The analysis of results will be unfolded in a systematic way following the sequence of the questions as they appeared in the questionnaire which was presented to the interviewees face to face.

The first section of the questionnaire dealt with the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

4.1 Demographics of the sample

In terms of **age**

* Eleven (18%) of the interviewees were between 28-40 years of age.

* Thirty (50%) were between 41-50 years of age.

* Nineteen (32%) were between 51-60 years of age.

In terms of **gender**

* Thirty-seven (62%) were males.

* Twenty three (38%) were females.

In terms of **educational qualifications**

* Twenty four interviewees (40%) had an undergraduate academic qualification from a tertiary institution.

* Thirty six (60%) had a postgraduate degree.

In terms of **racial categories**:

* Thirty eight (63%) were Africans.

*Fourteen (23%) were Indians,

*Six (10%) were coloureds

* Two (3%) were Whites.

4.2. Leadership skills and effective management

The first question was structured as follows: **“What do you consider as the most important leadership skills and methods that contribute to school effective management?”**

The question was asked in order to assess the opinions, ideas and feelings of the interviewees regarding this important aspect of school management.

The following responses were recorded:

(There were multiple responses to the question)

TABLE 1

| Principal | % | Deputy Principal | % | HODS | % |
|------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
| Communication | 60 | Communication Skills | 80 | Communication skills | 75 |
| Teamwork | 15 | Consultations | 40 | Skills development | 30 |
| Commitment | 15 | Involving all stakeholders | 20 | Involving stakeholders | 30 |

| | | | | | |
|------------|----|----------|----|------------|----|
| Experience | 15 | Fairness | 15 | Monitoring | 20 |
| Fairness | 20 | | | Teamwork | 50 |

Inevitably solid management skills are an integral part of a process that builds up educators' morale, staff stability and cooperation, effective teaching, and learning strategies. It is thus important to explore the findings appearing in the above table.

It can be seen that **“communication” and “communication skills”** topped the list include as the most important tools contributing to effective team management. Communication and communication skills are associated with a number of potential problems facing schools as institution, such as conflict, conflict resolution, negotiations amongst various stakeholders, the involvement with the community and its representatives in the school governance, such as the School Governing Body and the like.

However, it can be seen in Table 1 that although communication was high (60%) amongst the principals, it was much higher amongst deputy principals and HODs (80 and 75%) respectively.

Such a difference was explained by one HOD as follows:

“Wherever you go you hear the same story, there are many principals who are very much dictatorial, they have their own ideas about the SMTs, the communities and the running of the school. Some of them are very experienced and very good in their jobs, but it is difficult for them to accept that communication between themselves, the deputy and the HODs is what makes a successful school. When we have a union (SADTU) meeting we always deal with such problems, because these are common problems. This situation (lack of communication) is not a problem we face with the

older generations or those traditionalists in NATU (the National African Teachers Union); it is all over the place. This is a situation that creates problems, because the principals are leaders not through appointment, but through communication and consultation, this is how they earn the respect of the SMTs, and the learners. The learners are intelligent young people, they are aware what is happening and if the communication on the part of the principal is not there, there is always the possibility for trouble”.

(Interview with M.T.Dlamini, eThekweni 23/7/2005)

It can be seen from the above table that there are different levels of emphasis are placed by the various categories of respondents in terms of successful aspects of management. Thus:

* Amongst HODs **“teamwork”** was mentioned by 50% of them as an important aspect of **solid management**. **“Skills development”** and the **“involvement of stakeholders”** (30% in each one) were also mentioned as was **“monitoring”** (20%).

These aspects seem to be crucial for the “lower echelons” of the SMTs as one of them explained:

“In the hierarchy of needs in terms of career development, the principal has reached the top, while the Deputy Principal is next in line to get promoted when the new cycle of promotions take place. The HODs on the other hand need a number of steps to be undertaken so their career can continue to develop. The most important is skills development, training in aspects of management, finance, human resource allocation and all these things we are seen as lacking as professional educators. Deputy Principals and Principals are trained seriously by the department in terms of management issues throughout the year. Principals with political contacts are trained in

the TRAIN THE TRAINER PROGRAMMES and then see themselves as moving more forward in their careers. Then we ask to be involved in all aspects of school management and especially in terms of teamwork so we can develop knowledge and skills for developing our career. This does not happen in most schools, with exceptions, especially when the principal is progressive and cares about the school and its progress, but it does not happen in our schools. Thus when we apply for promotions we find ourselves in a serious disadvantage”.

(Interview with P. Mthetwa, eThekwin 25/7/2005).

* Amongst Deputy Principals “consultations” is an important aspect of management (40%), as are the “involvement of all stakeholders” (20%) and “fairness” (15%).

* Amongst principals besides communication, “fairness” (20%), “teamwork”, “commitment” and “experience” (15% each) are also seen as important in this process.

4.3. Supervision/monitoring and control

Table 2 below includes the answers recorded in response to the question “What are the key ingredients of successful leadership skills in terms of supervision in schools?”

TABLE 2

Supervision of work in schools

| Principals | % | Deputy Principals | % | HODS | % |
|----------------------|----|-------------------|----|--------------------------|----|
| Resource allocation | 40 | Control/ feedback | 40 | Monitoring | 40 |
| Communication skills | 10 | Consultations | 50 | Control/feedback | 30 |
| Feedback | 20 | Communication | 40 | Consultation | 20 |
| Delegation of duties | 20 | | | Checking daily schedules | 20 |
| Exemplary attention | 10 | | | Communication | 20 |

(Multiple responses were recorded).

There are some interesting trends in these responses. Thus:

* The majority of responses emanating from the Principals were related to **“resource allocation”** (40%), followed by **“feed back”** and **delegation of duties** (both with 20%% responses). Virtues such as **“exemplary attention”** and **“communication skills”** were low on the agenda (with 10% responses each).

* On the other hand it becomes obvious that the responses of the Deputy Principals differ to a large extent, as the majority of them put **“control/feed-back’** as a high, **but secondary priority as compared to “consultation”** (50% as opposed to 40% for “control-feed back”). It is obvious then; that for this category of response consultation has more weight when compared to control-feedback in this sense. **“Communication”** is once again a very crucial aspect of supervision amongst Deputy Principals, as it was in relation to the previous question.

*Amongst the HODs the most prevalent virtue for supervision is **“monitoring”** (with 40%), which in fact does not even feature in the responses of the Principals, although it could be somehow related to “resource allocation”. **“Control/feedback”** (30%) also features strongly amongst HODs as it was amongst Deputy Principals, but not Principals. **“Checking daily schedules”, “communication” and consultation”** (all with 20%) are also features of the HODs responses. Especially the checking of daily schedules can be described as a very crucial aspect of everyday management, which is directly related to resource allocation and time management, two very crucial issues of school management as recent research findings have indicated very seriously.

Thus a nationally based study of 900 schools , both urban and rural as well as a number of case studies has indicated that poor school management , together with other crucial aspects of organisation have led to serious erosion of instructional time in most schools, especially rural and semi-rural schools. There have been many reasons advanced for such a reality such as increased administrative demands placed upon educators by OBE assessments and the like , but it is important to note that weak SMTs are also a key issue (**CAPE TIMES 12/12/2005 “ Children starved of teaching time in the classroom-HSRC).**

4.4 Planning/delegation of duties:

The findings appearing in Table 2 above indicate clearly that despite different emphasis placed by the interviewee groups, management needs to plan schedules and define achievable goals in its efforts to be effective. Thus, it is vital that instruments of successful supervision/leadership skills need to be in place. This is one of the reasons that made the principals say that being exemplary in the planning and execution of their duties was a very important matter of priority. It was the principals who also said that, when staff is aware of the vision of the school as an institution of excellence and the duties of all involved are defined things become easier to build the school and the culture of learning ,

4.5 Motivation:

Respondents did not identify this quality amongst themselves nor did the educators identify it too. However, it is suffice to note that if communication is in place, duties and achievable goals defined, then literature professes, that staff morale will be high. In fact, some principals note that inviting motivational successful role models to speak to staff and learners were important.

4.6 Leadership skills acquired from and outside the Department of Education

The next question was **whether respondents received leadership skills from the KZN DOE**. The question was set as it is well known that training and acquisition of new knowledge and skills is very important in the building up and maintenance of successful SMTs.

The following responses were obtained:

* Amongst the **principals** 17 (85%) had received leadership skills from the KZN DOE, while 3 (15%) had not.

* Amongst the Vice-Principals 11(55%) had received leadership skills from the KZN DOE, while 9 (45%) had not.

* Amongst the HODs 7(35%) had received leadership skills from the KZN DOE, while 13 (65%) had not.

These figures pinpoint a much skewed picture in terms of skills and knowledge acquisition amongst the three categories of respondents participating in the study. It is evident that comparatively speaking a much larger number of principals have received training provided by the UKZN DOE than deputy principles and heads of Departments. This is a trend that is considered detrimental to both the success of SMTs and the careers of those who are not principals.

This is what a school principal had to say about this reality:

“There is a national policy that says that an educator, including a deputy principal and an HOD must spend a maximum of 1720 hours in various activities in the school for the year. Educators are expected to spend 85%

of their time on teaching. This never happens because the responsibilities of all teachers and the SMTs have changed in the last two years. There was a time a year ago there was a new memo every two months, where we had to streamline new rules and procedures and methods. This does not allow the Deputies and the HODs to become an integral part of this training cycle, the DOE is very strict on this , they put most on the emphasis on the Principals , who they consider the leadership of the school , without taking into account that the school leadership these days is more collective. There are so many leadership issues to be learnt in the schools that the DOE do not understand , the financial and organisational aspects , there needs to be a round knowledge because new curricula are not the only problems , there are so many problems that the whole school leadership must face, not only the principal .Most principals are aware that they need to delegate duties and responsibilities to the other members of the leadership team , and these leaders need to be eager and trained, otherwise a school cannot operate”.

(Interview with Principal of school located in an African township. He requested anonymity).

The next question was **whether respondents received leadership skills outside the KZN DOE.**

The following responses were obtained:

* Amongst the **principals** 10 (50%) had received leadership skills from outside the KZN DOE, while 10 (50%) had not.

* Amongst the Vice-Principals 6 (30%) had received leadership skills from outside the KZN DOE, while 14 (60%) had not.

* Amongst the HODs 4(20%) had received leadership skills from outside the KZN DOE, while 16 (80%) had not.

It can be seen even in this case; in fact comparatively speaking even more, that much less Deputy Principals and HODs receive leadership skills and knowledge from sources outside the DOE than principals.

4.7 The types of leadership skills obtained from outside the department.

In relation to the question “**What skills have you acquired in training?**” the following responses were recorded (many of the responses were of a multiple nature):

* A large number of **principals** were trained in:

* Financial management.

* The Schools Act

* BATHO PELE (PEOPLE FIRST)

* Delegation of Duties.

* Excellent Service Delivery.

* The new curriculum and Outcomes Based Education.

Amongst the **Deputy Principals** the skills acquired were related to:

* The Schools Act.

* School Financial Management.

* The new curriculum.

The **HODs** were trained in:

* The new curriculum and OBE.

* The Schools Act.

It can be seen that there are a wide variety of skills acquired by the Principals, while the choice of subjects associated with the skills and knowledge acquisition of Deputy Principals and HODs is very limited. These are realities that have created very negative perceptions amongst the “lower echelons ” of the SMTs at schools, as one HOD confessed:

“There are a number of issues that have not been tackled by the Education authorities and leadership as well as the trade unions. The HODs and the Deputy Principals are not in fact parts of the school leadership or management , because they do not have the time, as far as the training is concerned who doesn’t want to have more capacity , but then there is too much to do with the new curriculum , like the assessment requirements , now most teachers don’t even do them , they have no time, they have a choice , do they teach the learners or do they do the assessments, this is a matter of choice, because if you don’t do the assessments then the DOE and the Principal and the Inspector are after you, then these things create problems and animosity amongst people. There are Principals who do not like these training things , because they know they cannot go further in the career , then they send the deputies , other principals do not care , they do

not go themselves , but they do not send HODs either, they say school first , capacity later, then no one can manage the school , because you need to know how to run the school”.

(Interview with Mr. N. Nair, HOD, Humanities)

In responding to the question “ **Did you feel that the training received was relevant to your current position?**” there was an overwhelming positive feeling and response on the part of all participants, who felt that the training and skills they acquired were very important for their own personal and the school development at large.

In relation to the question “**Do you think that leadership skills are acquired through other means and ways outside the training offered by the DOE and other agencies/organisations?**” the following responses were recorded amongst the groups:

* Amongst the **principals**, 18 (90%) answered in the affirmative, while 2(10%) were not prepared to respond.

* Amongst the **Deputy Principals** 19 (95%) answered in the affirmative, while 1 (5%) said “NO”.

* Amongst the **HODs** 14 (70%) answered in the affirmative, 3 (15%) answered “NO” and 3 (15%) did not wish to comment.

There is an interesting difference in these attitudes outlined by the visible diversity of opinions on the matter between Principals and HODs. One would expect the latter, which in most cases are relatively younger to have somehow different attitude and outlook as there are certainly a wide variety of other means and ways for professionals to acquire and develop leadership and other skills.

This reality became evident in the responses found in relation to the next question **“What other avenue/s an educator can utilise in attaining leadership and other skills besides the training offered by the DOE and other agencies/organisations?”** (Multiple responses were recorded).

*Ten principals (50%) mentioned trade unions as organisations that had much skills to offer , especially leadership skills , while 12(60%) mentioned community based organisations such as Community Policing Forums and the like and 7 (35%) mentioned School Governing Bodies . As one principal expanded on the matter:

“Younger people who aspire to get into the top leadership positions within the SMTs, apply for promotions throughout the place to seven or ten schools without a chance to succeed. One of their weaknesses is that younger people do not want to get involved in very key positions within the system that will give them opportunities to develop as professionals and leaders and human beings. I am a principal for 5 years, but I am involved with my children’s school Governing Body, because I want my children to have a school that is run professionally, and also since the more you get involved the more you learn. I do not say that young people must be involved in everything, but SADTU taught us as young people a lot of skills, because SADTU was very involved in progressive education for many years. We had seminars and workshops about all these new laws and regulations. I feel that the younger people of today are well educated and are eager to learn , but many of them are not ready to do the things that are required of them before they develop their careers. A lot of them see the union not as an organisation that will help them develop themselves, but as one that will be a step for them to get a promotion”.

(Interview with Mr. L. Shangase)

* Six deputy principals (30%) mentioned trade unions , 5 (25%) mentioned Community Based Organisations such as Development Committees or Ward Committees , and 10 (50%) mentioned philanthropic and other similar organisations that abound in the African areas , as well as the suburbs where good numbers of African professional have moved.

* Six HODs (30%) mentioned “credit unions” , very prominent amongst Africans as a way of developing leadership and other skills (“especially stokvels”) , while 5 (25%) mentioned trade unions.

4.8 Leadership styles

The next question was directly related to the concept and implementation of leadership style and the decision making process (“**How important is for the success of SMTs for decision making to involve all stakeholders?**”). The following responses were recorded:

* Sixteen of the Principals (80%) responded that the involvement of all stakeholders was of “great importance”, a very high percentage especially after the complete absence of similar response to the question of supervision, whose results appeared in Table 2 earlier. However, there were 4 respondents in the same category (20%), which although said that the involvement of all stakeholders was importance, of even greater importance was the “decisiveness of the top leadership of the school” (meaning the Principal and occasionally his/her deputy). Such a position was clarified as follows by one of its advocates:

“The laws of the country are very clear on a very large number of issues, and consultation and transparency are non negotiable. We all accept that learners, parents and community need to be inevitable consulted and decisions need to be collective and so on. However, the laws do not

provide for collective responsibility when my schools pass rate goes down from 95% to 62%, the responsibility is on my door , and this sometimes unfair. Different issues at the school demand different approaches and strategies , and if my average educator who is expected to spend 65% of his time teaching teaches only 30 hours , people will look at me for solutions, they will not blame my School Governing Body , and this is fair. I run the school, the SMT, and I am ultimately responsible for the final results. If I backtrack and start blaming my deputy, my HODs and the learners then I do not do my job properly; it is my leadership that is lacking. I am obligated to have collective leadership and to consult all stakeholders, but the effectiveness of the school is the ultimate result of my leadership”.

(Interview with S. Nzimande, eThekweni 23/7/2005)

* Amongst Deputy Principals 15 (75%) responded that involvement of all stakeholders was very important, while 5 (25%) did not wish to comment or did not know.

* Eighteen (90%) of the HODs resounded that it was very important to achieve involvement of all stakeholders in the running and management of the school, while two (10%) did not know.

Although there is a very strong support in the belief that it is very important for the management of school to be based on some kind of inclusiveness and wide involvement of stakeholders, it is interesting to notice some respondents not wishing to comment or claiming they do not know. Involvement of all stakeholders and role players is not only a legal requirement, but also an integral and irreplaceable part of a democratic management process.

It is important then, that the majority of respondents indicated that that involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process was important and that such a process could lead to the most effective way of school management. Such an attitude obviously indicates support for a participatory leadership style and a rejection of an autocratic leadership style.

There were a few instances situations where an autocratic leadership style was seen as advisable, especially endorsed by a few school principals in terms of control, feedback, and policy implementation. The participants generally felt that a participatory leadership style encapsulated in the involvement of all stakeholders and role player's leads to enhanced motivation and higher staff moral.

4.9 Recruiting knowledge

The next question was related to recruitment, an integral part of management. This process is associated with the knowledge, experience and competence that enable school managers to hire competent staff. The question was **“Do you feel that you have the recruitment knowledge and experience to make the right choices for your school?”**

* Amongst the principals 11(55%) felt that they had the expertise, knowledge and experience to make the right choices in terms of recruitment for their schools, 6 (30%) indicated that they did not have the experience, knowledge and expertise, while 3 (15%) said they were unable to comment on the issue as they felt inadequate.

* Seven deputy principles (35%) said they had the experience, expertise and knowledge to make the right choices in terms of recruitment for their schools,

11(55%) indicated that they did not have the experience and expertise, and two (10%) did not wish to comment.

* Three HODs (15%) felt that they had the experience, expertise and knowledge to recruit the right staff for the school, while twelve (60 %) felt did not have these virtues. Five (25%) did not wish to comment on the issue.

It is interesting to note the honesty, or perhaps the modesty of the majority of respondents in all three categories, with the exception of the principals, who admit that they have low, or even no knowledge, expertise and experience to make the right recruitment moves for their schools. One of the deputy principals offered the following explanation that seems to answer the question:

“In most African, both township and rural schools the educators situation is so skewed and weak that an additional educator in any discipline is welcome. If the educator is in a discipline that we really have a great need in like science or mathematics etc, so much the better. Most principals will tell you that they have not been trained in recruitment and they have no experience. I ask how difficult is it to see that you are short of an Art Education teacher , then the problem is to locate and recruit one, then I understand why there are many management teams that claim inexperience and lack of expertise in recruitment. If you are not hands on manager and recruiter then it is easy to find excuses for the failures and weaknesses. There must be the acceptance, however, that there are management teams that are reluctant to recruit the best educators around”.

(Interview with Deputy Principal at an African school. He wished to remain anonymous).

4.10 Skills transference and school management

This section will seek to establish whether

- Successful leadership skills and methods are transferable to school managers.
- What are considered the specific successful skills transferred in order of importance?

The report established these findings below:

4.11 Skills transfer

The next question sought to establish **whether skill transfer within the SMTs took place**. The following responses were recorded:

* Seven principals (35%) responded that skills transfer within the SMTs indeed took place, while 13 (65%) indicated that such process did not take place due to a number of reasons such as:

* Time limitations.

* Lack of interest.

* Lack of cohesion amongst the SMT members.

* Lack of overall coordination of strategic plans and activities/implementation.

* Three Deputy Principals (15%) responded that skills transfer took place within the SMTs, while 17 (85%) said that it did not. The reasons advanced for such absence were:

* Time limitations.

*Reluctance on the part of the skilled leaders to impart with their knowledge, experience and skills.

* Certain degree of indifference amongst the various groups and individuals involved.

* Three HODs (15%) responded that skills transfer took place within the SMTs, while 17 (85%) said that it did not. The reasons advanced for such absence were:

* Indifference on the part of the leaders of the SMTs, especially the Principals.

* Limitation of time.

* Lack of transformation at all levels of education, especially at school level.

* Heavy loads of administrative and teaching work of HODs and educators at the lower levels of the hierarchy.

The next question was “**How are skills transferred?**” and elicited the following responses from the Principals:

* At meetings amongst all stakeholders.

* At staff meetings, where everyone had the opportunity to participate, debate and be part of the collective decision making processes.

* At meetings between the Principal and members of the SMT separately on occasions when details and plans of the various departments were discussed.

One of the Principals who strongly believed that he was very active and instrumental in skills transfer commented on the subject:

“Like everything else skills transfer is a two way process, I cannot transfer skills to people who are not prepared to be part of this. It is true that the new curriculum and the rules and regulations of the last couple of years have put a lot of problems on the plate of educators , because it is true that this administration problem is simply too much for many people , this is why a lot of educators are tired and upset with all these problems they see all these things as been done deliberately by the Department . We try to build better relationships in the school; try to help the younger professional to become more advanced on many issues and then what happens? More work is given to them bureaucracy same salaries, us, SADTU controls the promotions, educators become disillusioned And whatever skills we try to transfer are falling into deaf ears. However, it is up to us to keep on trying if we want to build up a better educational system in the long term”.

Inevitably and finally skills transfer will lead to a better team building culture amongst colleagues and this will most likely have a positive effect on the learning exercise and the building of a more solid educational programme as Kessler (1992: 32) has outlined.

4.12 Leadership skill transference needs

It will be important to discover what are considered the preferred specific types of skills that need to be transferred to all levels of the SMTs, especially all members of these teams. The next question (“**Which do you feel are the most desired leadership skills that need to be transferred to all members of the SMTs?**”) was structured in order to address that key question.

The following responses were recorded (multiple responses were received):

* Amongst the **Principals:**

* Strategic Planning, 14(70%)

* Supervision and monitoring 10 (50%)

*Financial Management and Planning 11 (55%)

*Conflict Resolution 4(20%)

*Monitoring skills 3(15%)

Amongst the **Deputy Principals:**

*Communication Skills 14(70%)

*Project Management 11 (55%)

* Successful Service Delivery 5(25%)

* Curriculum Development 5(25%)

*Policy Development 2 (10%)

Amongst the **HODs**:

- * Communication skills 8 (40%)
- * Curriculum development 6 (30%)
- * Strategic thinking 6 (30%)
- * Conflict resolution 4 (20%)

It is interesting to compare the key desired leadership skills perceived by the three groups in their proper perspective and make several comments and draw conclusions:

*Communication skills: While this important skill was identified correctly by the Deputy Principals and HODs as a very important leadership skill that needs to be apparent and transferred, it does not feature at all amongst the Principals. The latter have (correctly) identified a small number of very crucial skills that are inevitably essential for the effective and efficient management of the schools, such as strategic planning, financial planning and management and conflict resolution.

Communication is, as international literature has demonstrated, behind every effective effort in problem solving and decision making in schools. Communication builds teams and cements professional and collegial relationships that broaden perspectives in efficiency and progress (Cunningham and Gresso 1993:11-13). Communication is behind every successful business/professional solid relationship that can ultimately lead to quality education through team building and partnerships that lead to real

empowerment. Communication reduces unhealthy competition amongst colleagues and increases the energy and cooperation that leads to effectiveness and success (Siu-Runyan and Heart 1992:23-24).

The school restructuring movement has had an impact on the knowledge, skills and dispositions required of school leaders. While principals are expected to share their power with other members of the school community: to be more democratic, collaborative and participative. This is achieved through communication (Cunningham and Gresso 1993:32-33)

*Supervision and monitoring: This was one of the skills mentioned by the Principals, but not by the two other groups, who preferred other skills, which can be seen and considered as equally useful for the future. However, it needs to be said that supervision and monitoring are integral parts of solid leadership traits in SMTs as they lead to timely interventions that contribute to better management and utilisation of staff and resources. Supervision and monitoring streamline the decision making processes and is instrumental in correcting possible mistakes as well as identifying potential risks and weaknesses in the process ((Institute for Educational Leadership 1994:23-27)

*Strategic planning and organisation: This was cited as a crucial skill by the Principals as well as some of the HODs, while the Deputy Principals mentioned a number of very interesting skills that need a brief exposition as they are indeed unique on their own

*Curriculum development: This has been correctly mentioned by both the Deputy Principals and the HOD, and it is interesting that it has been raised_as a “leadership skill” when every educator in every school in the country needs to be completely acquainted and knowledgeable about it. It has become, however, a habit for educational authorities to change such curricula so frequently that in the

end every one has to become a “leader” in understanding them and implementing them in the classroom.

A HOD who has a long history as an educator throughout the province said:

“It is very difficult for the average educator to understand the changes that have happened in the last few years and still take place in the new decisions about the matric marking procedures from next year. Young educators can learn and adjust faster , the older ones have to move forward with the new ideas , like the Outcomes Based Education, Curriculum 2005 , new systems of preparation , marking and the rest. The SMTs have opportunities to train on these new developments and then their duties and responsibilities are to make all these rules and regulations a law within the school , this is the sign of a good leader, you lead by example because you must teach the educators the new curricula , the new laws, how the school needs to operate, this is a major challenge for the Principals and the other members of the SMT”

(Interview with Mr.G. Thedi, eThekweni, 23 September 2005)

Project Management: This can be seen as a very interesting leadership skill identified by a good number of the Deputy Principals. In fact Project Management as a leadership skill could be a very important acquisition for most team members of the SMT as it has been utilised internationally. In their seminal treatise of managing successful schools Snyder and Anderson (1986) pinpointed the potential significance of project management in setting up Senior Management Teams and stakeholders related to them.

4.13 Assessing factors determining school performance

The reasons for success or failure of a particular school have their roots in a wide variety of material realities, many of which are founded in the inequalities and injustices of the past and the present. Thus it was felt important to ask the management teams their opinions, ideas and perceptions regarding the causes underlying poor /unsuccessful performance in a school.

The question was:

“What are the main causes for a school to be unsuccessful in terms of performance?”

The following responses were recorded (of a multiple nature)

The **principals** gave the following reasons:

* Lack of resources, 16 (80%)

* No sufficient infrastructure 12(60%)

* Shortage of books, 6 (39%)

The **deputy principals** responded as follows:

* Lack of parental involvement 13 (65%)

*Lack of interest amongst all stakeholders12 (6)%

* Poverty in the area 7(35%)

* No interest from the DOE 5 (25%)

* The **HODs** had the following responses:

* Lack of facilities and resources 11 (55%)

* Poor learner calibre 7(35%)

* Language problem 6 (30%)

* No interest on the part of DOE 4 (20%)

There were some important statements and ideas emanating from these responses, as were the glaring omissions.

* Thus the responses of the principals who basically blamed the failure of a school (including possibly their own) on fundamental **material circumstances**, such as lack of resources, shortage of books and lack of proper infrastructure (i.e. the lack of libraries, laboratories, office space, computers and the like.

* Contrary to that, **the deputy principals** identified poverty as a key factor, but at the same time pinpointed the lack of interest on the part of stakeholders as well as parental involvement as underlying factors leading to failure. Parental involvement is associated with attending of school meetings, parental supervision and monitoring and the like.

* The **HODs** on the other hand although the mentioned the obvious lack of facilities. They also pinpointed the poor standards amongst the learners as well as the seriousness of the language problem as a serious barrier to success.

These are real and tangible reasons articulated by the three categories of respondents. However, it needs to be said that there were a number of serious

realities that were not even touched by the respondents, which in the context of this research need to be identified and pointed out.

*High unemployment and joblessness in many townships and informal settlements visited during the empirical study was evident and on many occasions the researcher was told that parents and other adults were emigrating to Gauteng in search of work. This obviously had negative effects on learners who on many occasions had to reside with their grand parents and other relatives under very serious conditions of poverty and deprivation.

* It has been reported extensively that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has caused serious damage amongst educators as many of them have become victims of the disease and this has led to a serious decrease in the number of experienced educators (www.sadtu.org.za/global_campaign_for_education/SA).

*Lack of consultations and unsuccessful communication were not even cited as causes for the below average performance of schools.

*Team work as a corner stone of success was not mentioned by the interviewees once. Yet international research experience has indicated that teams working together lead to positive results,

This is because:

*More people are involved in a decision that will have serious consequences for large number of learners, as well as the community, including the parents.

*When a team works together fresh and innovative ideas are exchanged between team members and there is a healthy exchange of opinions.

* This becomes even more evident because there is more information and actions from a group of people with different experiences, level of knowledge and understanding as well as skills

* In a group situation there is always a better chance that mistakes will be corrected in the process.

(www.kzneducation.gov.za)

*It was interesting to note that attendance of meetings of the community on the part of the SMTs was not mentioned as a challenge they face, although holding and attending meetings in the community is considered to be one of the most important aspects of successful school management. It is in such meetings that management teams come in close contact with the communities and their learners, build up a team spirit, learn to appreciate the problems and challenges facing the community as a whole and the like.

*There was no mention of networking as another challenge that could have affected success as such initiatives could lead to more successful fund collecting initiatives beyond the communities they serve, creating contacts with other stakeholders and role players etc.

* Staff shortage was another challenge facing especially African schools that was not mentioned directly.

* The lack of functionality of the very SMT as well as the School Governing Bodies was not even mentioned directly in the responses

* The educator/learner ratio was not mentioned.

*Lack of basic skills such as financial management, administrative capabilities etc were not in the response list.

One could in fact continue the list for several pages as the situation in many schools and areas in Kwa-zulu Natal faces a large number of serious challenges that need to be faced head on by all stakeholders and role players.

4.14 Accessing the effectiveness of tools used to improve school performance

Effective tools used by management teams are considered those that improve learner performance by enabling educators to function optimally. Thus the responses of all categories of interviewees in the next question were of importance (“**What are the tools you find more effective in your efforts to improve school performance?**”).

The responses were as follows (multiple responses were recorded):

* Amongst the **principals:**

* Regular meetings with stakeholders, 9 (45%)

*Workshops for educators, 7(35%)

* Strategic planning, 6 (30%)

* Control of learner admission 5 (25%)

* Infrastructural and facilities development 4 (20%)

Amongst the **Deputy Principals:**

* Strategic planning 9 (45%)

* Fund raising initiatives, 8(40%)

* Facilities development 7 (35%)

* Intervention strategies 5(25%)

* Cutting down on educator's administrative loads 3 (15%)

The **HODs**:

*Enhancement of community participation 9 (45%)

* Increase of control/feedback 7(35%)

*Increase of parental involvement 7 (35%)

* Teamwork 6 (30%)

An analysis of these findings identifies a number of important realities evident in such attitudes:

* Although strategic planning and facilities development are considered common tools amongst both Principals and Deputy Principals, they are absent from those identified by HODs.

* In fact these two common tools were the only ones identified by the two "senior" groups in the school management. Thus the "regular meetings with stakeholders" identified correctly by the Principals were not considered as useful tools by not even one Deputy Principal. On the other hand a key problem facing educators

“the cutting down of administrative work” as identified by the Deputy Principals was not even mentioned by the other two categories of respondents.

In fact a recent report by the Human Sciences Research Council had this to say on the issue of administrative backlogs amongst educators:

“ Significant differences exist between former White, Indian ,coloured, Black and new schools established since 1994 in terms of time spent on teaching and other activities .Generally teachers at former white schools spend more time over the week on teaching and other activities than their counterparts in black or other schools. Administrative demands created by larger classes are simply overwhelming for educators”.

(Cape Times 21/12/2005 “Children starved of teaching time in the classroom-HSRC).

* It is interesting to note that it was only HODs amongst the three groups that pointed out tools such as “enhancement community participation” and “increased parental involvement” as vital in the success of the school. Besides been an integral part of the educational transformation in the country as expounded by the key policy documents and laws of the country, it needs to be said that international research and experience has shown conclusively that parental involvement and community participation are very crucial aspects of educational management and the transformation process itself (Snyder and Anderson 1986; Institute for Educational Leadership 1994).

* “Teamwork” as an important tool for the growth and development of the management team and the school in the final analysis was also mentioned only by the HODs, while ignored by the other groups. International research has shown that teamwork benefits a creative and unified culture that leads to purposefulness, pride, confidence, enthusiasm, commitment, loyalty and

satisfaction (Cunningham and Gresso 1993:12-17). Teamwork also leads to bonding and cohesiveness as well as togetherness and a strong sense of belonging (Kessler 1992:33).

A senior researcher with the Department of Education, who started his educational career as an educator, was promoted to HOD, Deputy Principal and Principal and is at present a Senior Director in the Department has this to say on the matter of tools for successful school management, educational development and all round transformation in the class room and beyond:

“It is a very wide and complicated question. However a few pointers are crucial: The principal should be a successful communicator and motivator of both staff and students .He/she must aim to improve teacher-morale by explaining to educators the goals, expectations and responsibilities of the teachers. There must be an inclusive approach in solving problems. Communication skills must be regarded as one of the most important skills in the managing of successful schools. Workshops, staff development and supervision, are key tools to manage the challenges posed. Teachers must feel they come together and every educator must be involved in extra classes both in the morning and afternoon. This is up to the management team to install such love and dedication to the educators. There must be proper delegation of duties and the awareness of expected outcomes amongst all stakeholders, there must be report backs together with feedback, principals must supervise the work and those of their staff. The improvement of attendance at all levels was the most important way to manage challenges posed to the smooth execution of our duties as educators. Absenteeism of learners and sometimes educators is a challenge to all schools; it is a negation of all principles of BATHO PELE”.

(The interview took place in eThekweni 14/8/2005. He preferred to remain anonymous)

4.15 Assessing the relationship between the weaknesses in SMTs and poor school performance

Inevitably a weakness in the structures, functioning or administration of SMTs leads to a schools poor performance, at least in theory. Hence the next few questions will seek to confirm or negate such an assessment, as well as to investigate what are considered the key weaknesses in SMTs.

Thus the first question was structured as follows:

“Would you agree, that weaknesses in the SMT have negative effects on the overall school performance?”

*Amongst the **principals**:

*14 (70%) strongly agreed

*4 (20%) agreed, and

*2 (10%) were undecided

* Amongst the **Deputy Principals**:

* 16 (80%) strongly agreed

*3 (15%) agreed

*1 (5%) was undecided

*Amongst the **Heads of Departments**:

*15 (75%) strongly agreed, and

*5 (25%) were undecided.

There was thus, a general agreement that weaknesses in the SMTs have negative effects on the performance of the school as a whole. The next natural question, then, was which were considered the major weaknesses in the SMT that resulted negatively on the overall school performance.

These were the recorded responses to the question **“Which do you consider the most important weaknesses in your school SMT that have negative effects on its overall performance?”**

Amongst the **principals** the following responses were recorded (multiple responses):

* Indifference amongst the members of the SMT (11 or 55%).

* Lack of leadership qualities amongst members of the SMT (8 or 40%).

* Lack of knowledge and capacity (6 or 30%).

* Lack of cooperation amongst the members (4 or 20%).

* Incidents of disobedience that lead to conflicts (2 or 10%)

Amongst the **Deputy Principals:**

* Lack of proper supervision procedures and channels (11 or 55%)

*Lack of capacity (8 or 40%)

* Lack of proper communication skills and channels (6 or 30%).

* Reluctance to involve all stakeholders and role players in the function and activities of the school (4 or 20%).

Amongst the **HODs**:

* Lack of knowledge and capacity, 12 (60%).

* Indifference on the part of leadership, 10(50%).

* Lack of consultation and communication, 7(35%)

* No supervision, 5 (25%)

The analysis of these responses pinpoints a number of very interesting realities underlying a variety of commonly accepted weaknesses amongst several of the groups. Thus:

**Lack of supervision*

There seems to be no appropriate control or supervision mechanisms in the schools according to both Deputy Principals and HODs (but this is not even mentioned by the Principals, who obviously are of the belief that there is supervision in the schools. Supervision directly related to control of educators as well as regular class visits as an important aspect of the SMTs duties. Control and supervision mechanisms also include the inspection of educator's schedules and regular meetings with educators. The lack of such mechanisms and processes are considered serious weaknesses amongst Deputy Principals and HODs in the present project.

**Lack of communication and consultation*

Deputy Principals and HODs have mentioned the lack of communication and the non-utilisation of communication skills as weaknesses, but not by Principals. Thus there is a belief amongst these groups that there is a dearth in of communication amongst stakeholders that in the end does not enhance their participation. Lack of communication and communication skills amongst members of the SMTs lead to a lack of cohesiveness and hence effectiveness of such teams (Cunningham and Gresso1993: 34-36)

**Indifference*

Interestingly, Principals and HODs, but not Deputy Principals have mentioned indifference as a weakness in the function of the SMTs. Indifference of course is a generally generic attitude that can be found amongst individual members of SMTs, educators in general, the learner leadership or the community leadership. In most occasions it has very serious and negative effects on the functionality of SMTs.

**Capacity*

The lack of capacity was the only common weakness identified by all groups of respondents. Capacity is associated with a number of fundamental basics of a SMT including knowledge and understanding of each member of the institutions mission and vision, fulfilling of specific tasks, purpose and goals underlying the schools success or failure, roles duties and responsibilities. If there is no capacity in relation to these fundamental tenets of success and progress, and this is readily accepted by all sections of the SMTs, then something radical needs to occur, soon.

**Lack of leadership*

This was mentioned only by the Principals and most likely denotes a negative perception on the leadership of other members of the SMT, or, perhaps a self-criticism of themselves as **de facto** and **de jure** heads of the institutions they lead. One of the Principals who believed that the lack of leadership in the part of other members was a serious impediment to the development and progress of the school had this to say in defending his position:

“ One reaches the position of Deputy Principal or Head of Department in one way or another , one expects that the next career step is one , or even two steps forward. It is natural for people who reached one level to wish to move to the top. However, when one is legally and professionally obliged to provide top or middle management leadership in the school, he/she must do it. Most of the leaders in the SMT who are not principals, want to be one , and in most cases they do not provide the leadership they should, because they expect the Principal to do the job , while they plan their way ahead in order to grow their career through the promotion. The Principal can provide the top level of leadership and can do a lot of things for the school as a leader, but he/she cannot do everything without the cooperation and assistance of the rest of the team If this does not happen , then all the strategic planning and operational plans are just not implemented. In such a situation, it is the school and the learners that suffer”.

(Interview with Mr. J. Shangase, eThekweni 26/8/2005)

**Cooperation*

The principals stressed this aspect, but not by the other groups. Cooperation is seen as a key issue for success of the SMTs and is related to a number of issues such as the understanding of the school's mission.

**Disobedience*

The principals, but not the other members of the SMT mentioned this aspect. Disobedience can be described as a vital weakness for the smooth and effective operation of the SMT, irrespective where they originate from, i.e. members of the same team, learners, parents, or community members. Disobedience is a major burden to the cohesiveness of the SMT and the school as a whole (Institute for Educational Leadership 1994:12-13).

The next question was whether SMTs **were aware of the particularities and details of the new curriculum destined to be introduced to Grade 10 in 2006.**

The change in Grade 10 is considered the “last phase” of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system, that is the cornerstone of the educational system in the country. The introduction of the National Senior Certificate will take place in 2008 and it will be the final phase of the newly introduced system.

In this context it is important for the SMTs to be well aware of the system, as it is upon it that they have to base their strategic and organisational plans. Hence the mechanics of the curriculum need to be known to the leadership of the schools. It has been reported to the researcher by several of the interviewees that there were large numbers of educators who had various workshops and seminars where the dynamics of the new system was disseminated to them, but this did not occur amongst the members of SMTs. Thus it become important to understand that although educators have gone through some orientation on the curriculum, this has not occurred amongst senior management structures of the schools.

This reality means that there are many schools, especially the very disadvantaged ones in both urban and rural areas will not be able to implement

the expected curricula because of the lack of resources, both human and infrastructural. As one Deputy Principal who is also a senior SADTU Provincial official said:

“All of us need to be very open and able to understand everything about the 2006 initiatives. We have asked for workshops and seminars on the subject and the Head of the KZNDOE told us that we have no choice but to implement these steps , we asked him how , because there are very serious problems and challenges in these phases, there are schools that are ready to teach the subjects , others are not , then there is no equality in the learning system , it is unfair . We are asked to teach accounting , which is based on IT and computers, but the majority of our schools have no computers, the same with drawing , there is complete lack of infrastructure, the Department knows all this . How can we implement such radical changes without equipping the schools sufficiently? How can the learners choose subjects, if the educators are not themselves equipped on these issues?”

(Interview with Mr.S.Nzimande, eThekweni 28/9/2005)

Such realities will inevitably have important learning and future repercussions for the learners, who are in fact the social cornerstone of the educational system. Given the general perception that SMTs are not really prepared for the implementation of the new curriculum, this might jeopardise the chance of learners in choosing the subjects they prefer. Such a reality in fact compromises many learners' possibilities for the future as their choices could not be met by the school.

As one principal explained:

“There is a lack of infrastructure weakness in most of the schools, there are no laboratories, computers, not even offices, and how the learners can choose accountancy and science when there is no equipment? There are limited choices in many, if not most of the schools , and SMTs and educators must be able to guide the learners in career choices etc, this is what is expected for us , but how can this happen if we do not have the facilities? How can those learners who really have the capabilities to achieve good symbols and study at universities be accommodated and learn at schools with no equipment. What we do we perpetuate the injustices of the past if we do not equip the schools and give equal chances to all our learners? We do not ask to do everything for every school that has even a 15% matric pass rate, but there must be priorities in the allocation of funds of capital goods , especially for disadvantaged schools “

(Interview with Mr.J.Shangase)

In responding to the question the following were recorded:

* Amongst the **principals**:

* Fifteen (75%) answered that they **knew very little** about the curriculum that was to be introduced in 2006.

* Five (25%) indicated that they **knew nothing** about the curriculum.

* Those who responded that they knew very little about the curriculum indicated that their limited knowledge was the result of their own curiosity and zest for knowledge, as well as their interest on the subject as it was required of them as leaders to spearhead the programme. They expressed both disappointment and frustration on what they perceive as unwillingness on the part of the KZN DOE to

keep them informed on the details of the proposed changes and initiatives that will be introduced in 2006.

* Amongst the **Deputy Principals**:

* Seventeen (85%) responded that they **knew very little** about the proposed changes in the curriculum.

* Three (15%) **knew nothing**.

* Amongst the **HODs**:

* Eight (40%) **knew very little** about the curriculum.

* Twelve (60%) **knew nothing**.

It becomes obvious then, that the knowledge of the majority of respondents regarding the changes in the proposed curriculum changes to be introduced in 2006 is very limited. Such a reality reflects badly on the efforts of the KZN DOE in its efforts to streamline the knowledge level of SMTs in the province regarding such important changes that are destined to have very serious consequences in the learning process and the future of the majority of learners in the province.

The chapter was the empirical section of the thesis that attempted to examine through scientifically based research methods the realities facing SMTs as well as the attitudes, ideas and perceptions of Principals, deputy principals and HODs on a wide variety of issues and challenges rooted in the functions, structures and organisation of school management teams in the KZN province.

The next chapter includes the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The present research project examined a wide diversity of issues related to school management as an integral component of the effort to achieve educational success and effectiveness. It dealt with aspects of capacity, skill knowledge and transfer, leadership and the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making.

Issues of school management were empirically examined in a case study in the Province of Kwa-zulu Natal, the most populace in South Africa and one of the poorest. This is a social and economic reality that poses serious challenges to both the leadership of the KZNDOE, SMTs of all schools, educators, learners, parents and the community as a whole, especially the African community that suffered the injustices of apartheid the most.

Following the literature review, that included a brief exploration of the historical circumstances and challenges facing all stakeholders and role players in the educational arena and an exposition of the nature and significance of school management, the methodological framework of the study was outlined in terms of the data collection methods, the sampling framework and the presentation of the ways the subsequent analysis would proceed.

The empirical component of the thesis dealt basically with the analysis structured in such a way (both qualitatively and quantitatively) to confirm or reject the hypotheses set in the first chapter of the thesis.

The empirical analysis showed that the following hypotheses were rejected or confirmed as follows:

*** There is divergence of opinions amongst SMT members regarding the involvement of all stakeholders in decision making.**

The hypothesis has been rejected partially as there was a general agreement amongst all components of the SMTs that involvement of all stakeholders in decision making was important for the success of the school. However there was a minority of SMT members that believed that decisiveness of the top leadership of the school was of equal importance.

***Skills transfer has been absent within SMTs themselves.**

The hypothesis has been confirmed in its entirety as there was a general agreement that skills transfer have been absent within SMTs themselves.

*** There is divergence of opinions amongst SMT members regarding leadership skills needed for the school's successful and effective performance.**

The hypothesis has been confirmed in its entirety, as there were very divergent opinions amongst SMT members regarding the leadership skills needed for the schools successful and effective performance, especially in regard to key aspects such as

***Communication skills**

***Supervision and monitoring**

***Strategic planning and organisation**

***Curriculum development**

***Weaknesses in SMT functions lead to poor school performance.**

There was a general agreement to the statement, which signifies that the hypothesis has been confirmed in its entirety.

*** There is a diversity of ideas and perceptions within SMTs themselves regarding weaknesses that have negative effects on school performance.**

The hypothesis was confirmed as the diversity of ideas and opinions within the SMTs themselves regarding weaknesses that have negative effects on school performance were more than evident.

*Thus **material circumstances** , such as lack of resources, shortage of books and lack of proper infrastructure(i.e. the lack of libraries, laboratories, office space, computers and the like were identified by principals , while **poverty** was identified by deputy principals as a key factor as were the lack of interest on the part of stakeholders as well as parental involvement . **HODs** on the other hand pinpointed the poor standards amongst the learners as well as the seriousness of the language problem as a serious barrier to success.*

***There is a general lack of knowledge amongst SMT members regarding the new curriculum that will be introduced in 2006.**

The hypothesis was confirmed in its entirety as very few SMT members interviewed were aware of the particularities of the new curriculum that is to be introduced in 2006.

The research, especially its empirical section showed conclusively that there are some fundamental problems that need to be studied thoroughly and solved within the context of the SMTs as a fundamental organ, instrumental in moving a particular school towards progress and development.

***Communication skills**

Communication skills were very important in their interactions with staff and other stakeholders. Holding meetings regularly, communicating with other stakeholders e.g. parents, police, council officials, can lead to successful overall performance of a school.

***Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning for a school is of immense value meaning that defined goals are clear, and the subsequent delegation of responsibilities makes managing easier.

Supervision

*Supervision of educators and learners together with effective control mechanisms contributes to the further development and success of the school

and better performance of learners. Proper delegation of duties, progress reports and feedback sessions are important mechanisms for success.

Staff Development and Leadership Skills

Leadership skills acquisition and staff development through participation in seminars, workshops, community involvement and trade union activities are very important for all members of SMTs as well as all educators.

The rest of the challenges will be tackled in the last part of this chapter that will deal with the **recommendations** suggested by the researcher as his contribution to a better environment both within SMTs and the schools in general.

Firstly, there are a few recommendations that can be seen as **generic**, but are considered by the researcher as **a crucial first step towards school effectiveness and excellence**:

*There must be a general undertaking amongst ALL SMT members that every classroom has a well trained and educated professional educator who teaches learners consciously every day without absenteeism.

*The SMT must guarantee that every classroom and learner has adequate supply of books and learning materials.

*The SMT must guarantee a ceiling for class size, so there is no overcrowding.

*The SMT ensures that the budget guarantees teacher recruitment that guarantees proper learning and teaching.

* The SMT, together with the KZN DOE invests in teacher training and support teachers to broaden their teaching approaches.

* There is active participation of learners, SGB and communities in all key decision making processes.

* SMTs put communities and children at the heart of process to monitor the effectiveness of education.

*SMTs ensure that schools are safe.

*SMTs ensure that children are taught in a language they understand, using the mother tongue in early years of schools and beyond.

Additionally SMTs, as well as ALL their members ensure that:

*They develop trusting relationships

* Create shared values

*Clearly define the roles and objectives of the team

*Ensure the competency, credibility and commitment of team members

*Develop a shared culture,

*values beliefs and

*effective team work

*Develop quality relations with other staff

*Ensure that communication with them is effective

*Ensure that there are learning opportunities available to team members outside or through the KZDOE

* There must be sufficient knowledge of the role function and purpose of the SMT.

* There must be collective agreement and understanding of the specific roles of team members that will lead to excellence.

* There must be relentless focus on improvement and learning from all team members.

* There must be commitment, dedication and willingness to accept that all decisions are in the best interests of the learners, their parents and the community at large and in absolute agreement with the educational goals of the school

*There must be a culture of trust and support among all members of the team.

* There must be transparency and accountability in the team

*The SMT must ensure that the entire staff has opportunities to input to decision-making processes.

* The SMT must ensure that the wider staff has sufficient access to information relevant to all role players and stakeholders in the school.

* The SMT needs to be collectively responsible for the investigation and identification of needed skills amongst its members.

*All stakeholders, especially parents and educators, need to be aware of SMTs vision and the objectives of the school,

*They must be kept regularly informed of the school progress (through regular meetings)

*SMTs need to be networking with the police, health services, and social workers.

*There need to be regular assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the existing Management structures and its operations.

The SMTs are very important elements and organs for educational and school development. The present research pinpointed some of its strengths and weaknesses as identified and expanded upon by SMT members.

The road to excellence is a tough one, and SMT contribution towards that goal cannot be denied, they are essential parts of failure or success.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

AGE -----

GENDER MALE FEMALE

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION -----

RACIAL GROUP -----

What do you consider as the most important leadership skills and methods that contribute to school effective management?

“What are the key ingredients of successful leadership skills in terms of supervision in schools?”

Have you received leadership skills from the KZN DOE?

YES/NO

Have you received leadership skills outside the KZN DOE?

YES/NO

What skills have you acquired in training?"

Did you feel that the training received was relevant to your current position?"

YES/NO

Do you think that leadership skills are acquired through other means and ways outside the training offered by the DOE and other agencies/organisations?"

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW

" What other avenue/s an educator can utilise in attaining leadership and other skills besides the training offered by the DOE and other agencies/organisations?"

How important is for the success of SMTs for decision making to involve all stakeholders?

Do you feel that you have the recruitment knowledge and experience to make the right choices for your school?

YES/NO

Have skills transfer within the SMTs taken place in your school?

YES/NO