

**MANAGING THROUGH TEAMS: AN INVESTIGATION
OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FORMAL TEAMS IN A
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE PINETOWN DISTRICT
OF THE KWAZULU NATAL DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND CULTURE.**

**BY
MALIGA PILLAY**

**A research report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the:**

**DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION
[EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT]**

in the School of Education, University of Natal, Durban.

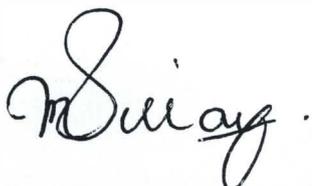
SEPTEMBER 2003.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that “Managing Through Teams: An investigation of the Effectiveness of Formal Teams in a Secondary School in the Pinetown District of the Department of Education and Culture” is my own work and has not been submitted to any other university.

All the sources consulted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Maliga Pillay

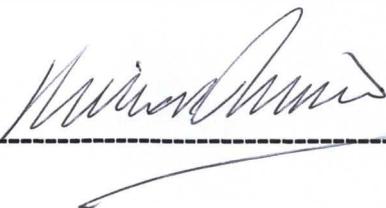
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Pillay', with a period at the end.

University of Natal, Durban, South Africa

September 2003.

STATEMENT BY THE SUPERVISOR

**THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED WITH /~~WITHOUT~~
MY APPROVAL.**

SIGNED: -----

**SUPERVISOR
PROFESSOR M. THURLOW**

SEPTEMBER 2003.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this mini-dissertation would not have been possible without the support and help of many people. My sincere thanks and appreciation are extended to the following people:

- ❖ My research supervisor, Professor Michael Thurlow for his unquestionable guidance, on-going encouragement and direction, and for reading my draft manuscript and making helpful comments.
- ❖ My dear husband Kassie, for his invaluable assistance throughout the process of this study, his love and encouragement and for being committed to my aspirations.
- ❖ My wonderful children Kovishthra, Ineshan and Prinesan for being a source of inspiration to me, and for their patience and tolerance when I was not always available.
- ❖ The Principal and Staff of the Secondary School in the Pinetown District, for their kind hospitality and for accommodating me at the school to conduct the research study.
- ❖ All the participants at the school for offering valuable information contained in this study and for their time in completing the questionnaires and participating in the interview.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the Effectiveness of Managing Through Formal Teams in a Secondary School. The study attempted to identify the role functions and composition of the formal teams at the school, based on the literature that there are complexities of managing through teams in secondary schools. If formal teams are to play a significant role in the management of secondary schools and to operate effectively, then opportunities for team performance and effectiveness are particularly significant.

The key focus of the study was to identify the level of operation of the Formal Teams in accordance with the characteristics of effective teamwork and the manner in which the team's goals are accomplished. The overall aim was to focus on the perceptions of team leaders in respect of their team's effectiveness and the perception of team members regarding their team's effectiveness. The study was conducted at a Secondary School in the Pinetown District. Three formal teams were in operation at the school and for each team, the leader and team members were included in the research. Thus, no sampling was required.

Quantitative and Qualitative research methodology guided the evaluative nature of the study. The data collection methods included a questionnaire, which was completed by members of the formal teams; semi-structured interviews conducted with the team leaders and observation of the three formal team meetings.

Many issues emerged from the data to exemplify the significant absence of team effectiveness at the secondary school. One of the main findings of managing through teams is that all three formal teams seem to be functioning below their potential due to many other factors, resulting in the impediment of team performance. It is clear that monitoring team performance and evaluating team achievements by the leaders are not sufficient enough for team effectiveness. There is also some variance as to how well the leaders feel about their leadership roles in respect of their team's effectiveness. There are instances where team

members spend too little time solving problems and too much time debating issues over which there is no control.

The study concludes, that there is scope for consideration of more varied approaches towards achieving effectiveness of formal team operation, followed by some recommendations, which suggest ways to improve team effectiveness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
Title	i
Declaration	ii
Supervisor’s Statement	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
Table of Contents	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Context of the Study	2
1.3 Focus of the Study	2
1.4 Research Methods	3
1.5 Limitations of the Study	3
1.6 Structure of the Study	4
1.7 Conclusion	4
CHAPTER TWO: RELATED LITERATURE	
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 THE CONCEPT OF MANAGING THROUGH TEAMS	6
2.2.1 The Purpose of Teams	6
2.2.2 The Composition of Effective Teams	9
2.2.3 The Nature of Effective Teamwork	10
2.2.4 Contribution to Team Effectiveness	11
2.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS	13
2.3.1 Developing Effective Teams	13
2.3.2 Effective Team Building	17
2.3.3 Effective Team Leadership	20
2.4 Conclusion	22

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS	
3.1 Introduction	24
3.2 Research Goals	24
3.3 Research Questions	24
3.4 Research Methods	25
3.5 Research Participants	26
3.5.1 Composition and Role Functions of Formal Teams	26
3.6 Research Instruments	28
3.6.1 Interviews	28
3.6.2 Questionnaire	30
3.6.3 Observation	31
3.7 Limitations of Design and Methodology	32
3.7.1 Interviews	32
3.7.2 Questionnaire	33
3.7.3 Observation	33
3.8 Conclusion	34
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	
4.1 Introduction	35
4.2 Interview	35
4.2.1 Interview Questions and Responses	35
4.2.2 Findings	39
4.3 Questionnaire Responses	40
4.3.1 Findings	48
4.4 Observation Analysis	49
4.4.1 Findings of the Senior Management Team	50
4.4.2 Findings of the Middle Management Team	50
4.4.3 Findings of the Academic Subject Team	51
4.5 Conclusion	52

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
5.1 Introduction	53
5.2 Summary of Main Findings	53
5.3 Recommendations	55
5.4 Conclusion	57
LIST OF REFERENCES	59
ANNEXURE A: Permission to Conduct the Research Study	62
ANNEXURE B: Interview Schedule	64
ANNEXURE C: Questionnaire	68

CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The concept of Managing Through Teams, including as it does the principles of working together, sharing and common purpose, would seem to offer one of the ways for effective management in South African schools. All schools, especially the secondary schools, operate on the basis of teams, which often have a place in the formal structure of the organization, with the emphasis that teams of people form part of the management structure of all education institutions.

Formal teams are a particularly appropriate vehicle for the devolution of power and responsibility to the institution, which places particular emphasis on the role of leaders of these teams. This means that the team leaders have to understand and communicate to their members the rationale, which underpins the work of their particular team and whatever the tasks for the teams, these have to be spelt out clearly by the leaders. According to Bell [1992, p. 48], team leaders have particular roles in monitoring the link with the school development plan including the teams' development needs and in ensuring that the tasks of the teams are reviewed and evaluated. If Formal Teams are to play a significant role in the management of schools and to operate effectively, then opportunities for team performance and effectiveness are particularly significant [Middlewood and Lumby, 1998, p.49].

This study will attempt to investigate the effectiveness of managing through formal teams at a secondary school. This chapter focuses on providing details on the context and focus of the study. A discussion on the research methods, limitations and the structure of the study is provided.

1.2 Context of the Study

The study is located in the field of Educational Management in general with a specific focus on “The Effectiveness of Managing Through Formal Teams in a Secondary School in the Pinetown District of the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education and Culture.” It cannot be assumed that the actual existence of Formal Teams at the secondary school will necessarily enable them to face new situations effectively, since these teams need to be managed effectively themselves. It is noted further that very little is known about the process through which teams actually learn to accomplish their tasks effectively more especially with the introduction of Curriculum 2005, whereby subjects have been banded together into Eight Learning Areas particularly in the Secondary schools. Evaluating the success of teams is usually perhaps focused upon the teams’ achievement based on the improvement of learners for whom the staff is responsible. However, an analysis of the related literature on teams reveal the characteristics of effective teams which are essential, so that the formal teams in the school have some accountability for what they do.

Thus, the findings of the research will prove valuable towards improving the effectiveness of formal team operation at the school. In order to gain access to the school to conduct the research study, the Management and Staff of the school granted the researcher permission. [See Annexure A for details]

1.3 Focus of the Study

The study proposes to investigate the Effectiveness of Managing Through Formal Teams at a Secondary School. The research will attempt to determine the perceptions of the team leaders and team members with regard to their team’s effectiveness. Hence, the research will focus on the following research questions:

1. What is meant by ‘managing through teams’?
2. What are the characteristics of effective teams?
3. What are the role functions and composition of formal teams in the school?

4. What are the perceptions of team leaders in respect of their team's effectiveness?
5. What are the perceptions of team members in respect of their team's effectiveness?
6. How effective are the formal teams and what recommendations might be made for improvements in team effectiveness?

1.4 Research Methods

The research methods used in this study are indicated below. The research questions will be addressed as follows:

Questions 1 and 2 will be addressed by reference to the relevant literature. Question 3 will be addressed with reference to the School Policy Documentation in consultation with the principal and team leaders. Question 4 will be addressed via semi-structured interviews with the leaders and through observation of team leaders at meetings. Question 5 will be addressed by means of a questionnaire containing closed and open items, administered to members of the formal teams and through observation of team meetings. Question 6 will be addressed by drawing upon the findings obtained for questions 3 to 5, analysed in the light of answers obtained for questions 1 and 2. There are three Formal Teams in the school and for each team the leader and members will be included in the research. Thus, no sampling will be required.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The main limitations are firstly, that the study is being conducted at a single secondary school and thus the findings cannot be generalized to other secondary schools where formal teams maybe in operation. Secondly, a member of the Middle Management Team indicated her intention to withdraw as a participant of this study and subsequently returned the questionnaire unanswered.

1.6 Structure of the Study

This research study is divided into 5 chapters. Chapter 1, 'Introduction and Overview' provides a brief introduction on the concept of the effectiveness of managing through formal teams in a secondary school. A discussion on the context of the study, the focus of the study, research methods and the limitations of the study are provided. Chapter 2, 'Related Literature' offers a detailed discussion on two crucial aspects of team effectiveness. Firstly, the Concept of Managing Through Teams which include purpose, composition, nature and contribution to effective teams, are outlined and secondly, the Characteristics of Effective Teams which include, developing effective teams, effective team-building and effective team leadership are discussed. Chapter 3, 'Research Methods' provides an insight into the specific research methodology used in the study. It examines the research goals, research questions, research methods, research participants including the composition and role functions of the three formal teams, research instruments used and the limitations of the design and methodology. Chapter 4, 'The Presentation and Discussion of Findings' focuses on important findings that were obtained by analysing the Questionnaire and the Observation and Interview schedules. Chapter 5, 'Summary and Recommendations' presents a summary of the main findings of the research and recommendations to improve effectiveness.

1.7 Conclusion

The following chapter presents the related literature which focuses specifically on two important aspects of the study, firstly, the concept of Managing Through Teams and secondly, the Characteristics of Effective Teams.

CHAPTER TWO : RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

It is believed that, the key test of the effectiveness of any team in education is the extent to which its work is concerned with the immensely challenging task of improving the quality of teaching and learning at the institution. The assumption that teams are automatically better than individuals, has been challenged most graphically by Sinclair, as the “ tyranny of team ideology” whereby extra work is demanded of individuals against their wishes [1992, p. 43].

All schools operate on the basis of either formal or informal teams, which often have a place in the structure of the organisation. Whatever the case, teams are a particularly appropriate vehicle for the devolution of power and responsibility to individual institutions. This places particular emphasis on the role of managers, who need to consciously foster and develop a teamwork approach in order to facilitate school improvement [Coleman and Bush chp.13, cited in Bush et al. 1994, p.270]. Therefore, if teams are to play an important role in the management of schools and operate effectively, then the ways in which members are selected and the opportunities for effective team building and development are particularly significant.

In evaluating the processes through which effective teams are developed and the manner in which they accomplish their tasks effectively, the following issues need to be discussed. These include the purpose of managing through teams; the nature of effective teamwork; contributions made by team members towards effective teams; the characteristics of effective teams; effective team building and the impact that the process of managing through teams has on effective team leadership.

Therefore, the concept of managing through teams, including as it does the principles of working together, sharing and common purpose would seem to offer one of the ways for effective management in South African schools, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 The Concept of Managing Through Teams

2.2.1 The Purpose of Teams

It must be acknowledged that, whilst managing through teams brings certain benefits to educational institutions, one also needs to be cautioned not to regard teams as being synonymous with 'groups' that may operate in a looser fashion. A suitable definition that encapsulates the meaning of a team, is provided by Everard and Morris as:

“A team is a group of people that can effectively tackle any task which it has been set to do...The contribution drawn from each member is of the highest possible quality, and is one which could not have been called into play other than in the context of a supportive team.”
[[1990, p. 172]

Advocates of team-based approaches support the idea of managing through teams for various reasons. Handy [1993, p.25] states that “the purpose of teams is to improve communication between people, offering them more chances of a creative solution to problems, because they bring together a range of talents and abilities.” Teams also represent the range of interests in an organization that no one individual can do. Furthermore, people are more likely to support and implement the quality of decisions made because more than one individual’s perspective is involved. Finally, teams offer valuable opportunities for personal and professional development, in view of the range of tasks available and the range of relationships that exists. Although these reasons are powerful ones, there is a need to acknowledge that management through teams is critical.

Wallace and Hall are critical of the fact that:

“You cannot just wave a magic wand and say that you’ve got teams. It doesn’t happen that way. You have to do everything you can to create as much of a team as possible.” [1994, p. 43].

However, O’ Neil views the attraction of teams and teamwork in education as having a dual purpose. In the first instance, the notion of managing through teams, equates itself with collegial approaches to decision making, which leads to a sense of ownership and has been recommended as appropriate ways of managing the work of professional staff in educational institutions. It is further noted that, development planning is one important process that is more likely to work well if it is handled by collegial teams in view of the fact that one of the main features of collegiality is its emphasis on teamwork. In the second instance, the attraction of teamwork is seen as an appropriate management response to the increases in workloads based on three aspects [1994, p.9].

Firstly, individuals are unable to keep up to date on all the skills and information requirements for managing autonomous educational institutions due to the increasingly specialized technical expertise. Secondly, teams are needed to process and co-ordinate all the necessary work due to the vast expansion in information processing, demanded of ‘electronic’ schools, and thirdly, teams are perceived as being a sort of relief against the stress associated with education management, creating a more equitable distribution of work amongst available staff. It can be further acknowledged, that teamwork throughout any organization is an essential component of the implementation of total quality management, for it builds up trust, improves communication and develops independence [Sallis, 1997, p.80].

However, there is a clear difference and increased complexities of managing through teams in the secondary schools. This is substantiated by the fact that secondary school managers and staff are likely to have a shared understanding at subject department level. There is, however, some evidence that subject department teams are key management structures in secondary schools, but there is little evidence of inter-

ch departmental collaboration. The point is that, the bigger and more complex the organization, the more difficult it is to ensure harmonious relationships between the various teams. It is found that the more effective and successful a single team becomes, the more it begins to compete with other teams within the institution for material resources, for more advantageous teaching space and time-tabling blocks, and this certainly constitutes a complex paradox for senior managers in secondary schools [Bell, 1992, p.132]. It is believed that the teacher with a responsibility for a subject area takes charge at the appropriate meetings and leads the policy statements in that area. ^{Poss.} Therefore, the principal as a leader of the school does not always have to be at the head of matters. He or she can also be a member of a team whilst a teacher with expertise can be a leader of a team [Bolam et al. 1993, p.49].

According to Trethowan, [1985, pp. 3-4] there are various types of teams that exist in the primary and secondary schools whereby teachers who belong to these teams are expected to act collaboratively with colleagues, in order to pursue the teams' objectives.

Some of the formal teams comprise of the Senior Management Teams [S.M.T.], who are responsible for developing the school's aims and policy; the Middle Management Teams comprising of Heads of Departments; the Staff Teams that exist mainly in the primary schools and the Subject Management Teams comprising of Subject Heads. The informal teams may comprise of the Project Teams, which are established on a ad-hoc basis to achieve short term goals and are disbanded when the tasks are accomplished, for example, a team to revise curriculum policy. Inter-disciplinary teams, which comprise members from various departments which include teaching and non-teaching staff to deal with long term issues such as a team to deal with H.I.V. and AIDS education in schools. [Middlewood, ch.10 cited in Lumby et al.2002, p.255].

12/5/20 Although selection is a key management concern, membership of formal teams is based upon those who have the expertise that is needed for a particular team. Therefore, the composition of both formal and informal teams will impact directly on team effectiveness, which will be considered next.

2.2.2 The Composition of Effective Teams

There is the notion that, it is possible to identify why some teams act more effectively than others. It is simply because of the composition of the teams that take into account the size of the team; the skills possessed by individual members that affect the way the team works and the range of behaviours that has an impact on the team's performance. Some of the most important work in this respect, has been done by Belbin [1981]. He analysed the performance of management teams and found that there was not always a correlation between a team's ability to perform effectively and the intellectual qualities and experience of its members. On the basis of psychological testing, Belbin [1981, p.128] has suggested that an effective team should include a variety of 'people qualities' and has identified eight distinctive roles as follows:

- **Chairperson**, with the powers of coordination and control of group resources but willing to be dominant when necessary.
- **Shaper**, who likes to shape decisions personally and to achieve quick results, and to push ideas forward to get a job done.
- **Innovator**, who is able to advance new ideas and strategies and is also able to transform the thinking of the team.
- **Company Worker**, who concentrates on the task at hand and does it thoroughly although he/she cannot deal with unstable situations.
- **Monitor Evaluator**, who thinks in a critical way, analyses ideas and is a good evaluator.
- **Team Worker**, who understands the strengths and weaknesses of the team members.
- **Resource Investigator**, who explores resources available outside the group and develops a wide range of external contacts.
- **Completer**, who keeps the team on its toes; insists that the project is completed and on time.

Researchers have found several roles to be essential in ensuring a smooth functioning, effective team. These roles may be taken on by separate members or

shared by various members at different times. Some individual members often fulfill more than one role. Some roles are clearly geared to accomplishing tasks, while others serve to maintain members participation [Schein, 1988, p.173].

Composition
Tansley, [1989, p.148] points out that the bigger the team, the stronger the pressure of conformity. He suggests that teams of eight to ten are ideal enough to give variety, and small enough to retain intimate team identity. Furthermore, team composition of this nature, brings together the range of skills and approaches that lead to significant enhancement of problem solving, creativity and enthusiasm. On the contrary, teams of four tend to be leaderless and unstable at times of crisis while three in a team can hardly be called a team. Nevertheless, Handy and Aitken [1986, p.152] highlights two contradictory factors: ' the larger the team, the greater the number of people can learn, listen and contribute, but the smaller the team, the more chance for individuals to take part and feel committed.' Therefore, the point about the composition of effective teams lies in the ability to get team members to perform at their best in all situations, fulfilling the team role they do best. Teams that are most successful are those that include members who are complimentary in their range of team roles. Hence, the success of formal teams in particular, depends on the nature of effective teamwork, which will be detailed below.

2.2.3 The Nature of Effective Teamwork.

It is stressed that teams need to be nurtured and developed if they are to be an effective vehicle for organizing work, and being able to function in a total quality environment [West-Burnham, 1992a, p.119]. Teams are established and are expected to function by means of certain tasks delegated to them, with much thought given to the way in which the team works. Bell [1992, p.45] points out, " There is rarely a shared perception in schools of what the term 'teamwork' means." Hence, teamwork is aptly described as, "playing from the same sheet of music", that is, the nature of effective teamwork is outlined by a group of people working together on the basis of shared perceptions, common purpose, agreed procedures,

commitment, co-operation and resolving disagreements openly by discussion [Coleman and Bush, ch.13, cited in Bush et al. 1994, p.257].

Therefore, it can be acknowledged that, teamwork is much more than meetings of groups but instead effective teamwork involves agreed aims, adopting a problem-solving approach and devoting time to team building as a potential for improvement. Thus, building effective teams is a major responsibility of the school manager and the senior staff members [Bell, 1992, p.45]. It may be observed that one of the principle strengths of effective teamwork is the generation of commitment to the work of the team and to the maintenance of relationships within the team. During this process, members evaluate their working relationship as a team and then develop and articulate guidelines that will lead to increased productivity and team member cooperation. This allows each member to provide their expert knowledge and skills in helping to solve problems, seeing a project through to completion and working on a new programme [Young et al. 1979, p.56].

However, the only danger is that creating this high degree of mutual dependence can lead to the phenomenon called 'groupthink' in which the team becomes introspective and lacks a clear focus on performance [West-Burnham et al. 1995, p.13]. Therefore, Coleman and Bush [ch.13 cited in Bush et al. 1994, p. 271] emphasize the fact that it is important to have a common understanding of objectives and a systematic approach if all members of the team are to contribute to team effectiveness, which will be highlighted below.

2.2.4 Contribution to Team Effectiveness

According to Adams, [1987, pp.98-106] when the team members are focused and they are all working to accomplish the same purpose, teamwork can be very rewarding and productive. Adams advocates that team members should use the proactive approach in making a contribution to team effectiveness, which is manifested by the following characteristics detailed below.

- The team members take a very positive approach in jointly determining the way they are going to work together as an effective team. Unbelievable results become possible when the team members choose to function in a particular way and are willing to set petty differences aside.
- When team members adopt a positive attitude and commit to use their knowledge and skills to contribute to the goals of the team, alignment with the team's overall purpose comes about.
- Having a well-defined purpose or vision of what the team will accomplish is a very powerful contribution to the team, which ensures that that the team members are empowered to accomplish the goals.
- Team members with positive attitudes towards change are willing to accept and make their contributions in order to accomplish the desired results.
- In making a contribution towards effectiveness, members need to understand that patience is required because some goals need long- term commitment.
- Team members, in making a contribution to the team, must recognize that negative comments can tear the team down. Therefore, they need to verbally and publicly support each other.
- Finally, if team members are to make valuable contribution to the team, priorities and time commitment needs to be established.

Challenge / Designing and developing teams is rarely seen as a priority in schools, they are instead created by virtue of knowledge, experience, and status and not by the ability of the individuals to work collaboratively. The reason for this maybe firstly, because of the demands made by the normal classroom responsibilities which takes up a lot of staff's time and secondly, because of the lack of teamwork training and development.

Therefore, Sallis [1997, p.82] reiterates that being part of an effective team is not a natural human function, it is learned. Training in teamwork and problem solving skills is often necessary. The members of the team have to learn to work together although teams are made up of individuals with different personalities, ideas, strengths, weaknesses, levels of enthusiasm and demands from their jobs. Teams, just like people, need nurturing and mentoring if they are to function effectively and give off their best. Hence, the characteristics of effective teams will be discussed in detail, in the next section.

2.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS

2.3.1 Developing Effective Teams

It may be argued that, the process of working as a team encourages team development. This is significant because it emphasizes the need for team members to have positive experiences of working together in order to feel confident in engaging in debate around contentious or difficult issues with other team members.

The belief is that, to have a set of criteria for effectiveness of teamwork, is essential, because in this way teams will have to have some accountability for what they do.

Middlewood and Lumby, [1998, p.49] have suggested the following criteria for team effectiveness:

- The extent to which the quantity and quality of specified outcomes for the team has been achieved.
- The extent to which the working of the team has enhanced its future capacity as a team.
- The extent to which the capacity of individual team members has been enhanced.

Nevertheless, teams are an important element in school management. They have the potential to enhance the quality of decision-making and of relationships, providing they operate effectively.

West-Burnham, [1992a, pp.121-124] has identified the following characteristics of effective teams discussed below.

[a] Explicit and Shared Values

It is worth stressing that no team can operate effectively, unless it is working in a context where the values are clear, kept to an agreed plan and on time. Equally, it is important that the personal values of team members are public and understood and translated into a mission that is done collaboratively with everyone who will appreciate them by virtue of having shared meanings leading to a recognized culture.

[b] Effective Quality Leadership

The team is sufficiently mature to base leadership skills on function and need, rather than power and status. There should be willingness by the designated leader to defer, and allow other team members to assume control, maybe someone with the expertise. For example, a deputy principal may have highly sophisticated decision-making and inter-personal skills and is therefore, competent to chair a management team meeting. A relatively junior staff member maybe the most knowledgeable about flexible learning, he/she should therefore be allowed to lead and be supported by the team, acknowledging team effectiveness. To ensure effective quality leadership, the leader must have the ability to command respect and to guide team members to achieve rather than to direct them.

[c] Enjoyment of Membership

Due to purposeful work and a congenial climate, membership of the team is enjoyed. Relationships created in the team could be tough or flexible, but respect for each other is critical including the quality of listening to others in an effective way. This implies commitment and involvement that is manifested in high morale and loyalty. Team members have self-belief, and confidence in others and the team as a whole, clearly displaying a sense of team harmony.

[d] Clear Tasks and Flexibility

Without strategic planning and dynamic team goals, effective teamwork is impossible. This includes performance indicators; specific outcomes with a clear timeframe; realistic targets; nurturing and reinforcing. To switch the sporting metaphor 'teams do not win by debating if the goal posts are moving, they win by scoring goals.' Effective team members should be able to cope with change, but also stable enough to deal with ongoing tasks and issues.

[e] Feedback and Review

Effective teams learn and develop by a process of continuous feedback and review. Team review is a permanent feature of every activity and leads to more effective working. By reviewing, it also keeps the team on track instead of digressing. Effective teams are very self-conscious, they devote time to getting feedback from their members and from each other.

[f] Openness and Candour

Members are encouraged to be open with one another in the expression of disagreement and of emotion. In other words if there is a problem, they should not be afraid to address it. There should be no 'hidden agendas' and there should also be

praise and criticism. Good motivation by people in the team ensures that the team's psychological health is maintained.

[g] Lateral Communication

The communication process is one of the most important processes in any team meeting. However, the process itself is complex and in an apparently simple message a mixture of facts, feelings, opinions, and insults can be communicated [Williams, 1984, p.215].

According to Riches [ch.12 in Bush et al. 1994, p.254] lateral communication is strongly associated with team activities, because it acts as a co-ordinating device across the same level, for the people who are working for the same objective but performing differentiated tasks. Thus, team members should be willing to share information with each other without special reference to the team leader or other members of the team. Networks, which are seen as potential enrichment are formed and nourished by the team, creating intense interactions.

[h] Collaborative Decision-making

Effective teams make the best decisions, which will be fully implemented by the team members. Quality decisions emerge from the full utilization of the knowledge and skills of team members, which means that the decisions will have been made in the minimum time but to maximum effect. Collaborative decision-making avoids voting, alternative viewpoints are worked through and disagreements resolved. Team members should participate in the planning and implementation of the work of the team, with people valuing the contribution of others.

[I] Emphasis on Action

Team decisions are expressed in terms of action. Each team member knows what is to be done, by whom and when. Effective teams issue agreed actions after their

meetings. Therefore, to sum up the development of effective teams, Katzenbach and Smith [1993, p.18] re-iterate, that effective teams bring together complementary skills and experiences that exceed those of any individual team. This broader mix of skills enables teams to respond to multi-faceted challenges. Teams are flexible and responsive to changing events and demands as a result they can adjust their approach to new information and challenges.

[j] Talents and Abilities

Effective teams utilize the qualities, talents, skills and experiences of each member that are shared in an atmosphere of willing co-operation. Concentration on the skills of problem solving rather than the difficulties of personalities ensure effectiveness. Effective teams are prone to cope with confrontation and conflict through negotiation. Difficult problems are not avoided but are handled positively.

According to West-Burnham et al. [1995, p.12] the importance of people being able to work collaboratively in order to develop and deliver quality learning experiences, and the need for a complementary range of skills, expertise and personal qualities amongst team members, emphasizes the need for effective team building. The area of team building attempts to establish the successful conditions for effective teamwork, which will be explored next.

2.3.2 Effective Team Building

It is acknowledged that team building is an important determinant of effectiveness in the operation of teams, by virtue of the fact that sound team building recognizes that it is not possible to fully separate one's performance from those of others. Team building is an effort in which a team studies its own process of working together and acts to create a climate that encourages and values the contributions of team members. Team building will occur more easily when all team members work jointly on a task of mutual importance [Tuckman, 1985, p.133].

According to Earley and Fletcher Campbell's research on Heads of Department, there is a need for middle managers to develop the skills necessary for team building within their departmental team. They report that effective practitioners link team building to the active promotion of staff development. They also refer to three factors, which facilitate collective working and are features of effective teams, namely: free flow of information, well-organized meetings and sharing of responsibilities [1982, p.192].

Nevertheless, Trethowan [1985, p.11] offers some guidelines for team building, which offers useful strategies. Firstly, team building takes time, it may be years rather than months before a sound and effective team is created. Secondly, team leaders must listen to and support the problems and solutions being proposed by the team. Thirdly, team changes need to be built into the routines or structures of the team. Fourthly, the team should not be allowed to slip back into its old ways once improvement has been agreed upon. Fifthly, team decision-making increases commitments to allow the team to decide and finally, team building needs constant maintenance and servicing to enable members to develop and grow.

It can be noted further, that the situation in schools is challenging for team leaders in view of the fact that teams operate according to the Eight Learning Areas. The functional duties of such teams are exacerbated by redeployment of all staff members, transfer and sometimes resignation.

Nevertheless, team building works best when the following characteristics of effective teams are implemented, according to Young et al. [1979, pp.55-64].

- There is a high level of interdependence among team members. The team is working on important tasks in which each team member has a commitment and teamwork is critical for achieving the desired results.
- The team leader has good people skills, is committed to developing a team approach, and allocates time to team building activities. Team management is seen as a shared function, and team members are given the opportunity to

exercise leadership when their experiences and skills are appropriate to the needs of the team.

- Each team member is capable and willing to contribute information, skills and experiences that provide an appropriate mix for achieving the team's purpose.
- Team meetings are most effective when they are frequent and effectively chaired to a published agenda handed a day or two beforehand to allow team members to prepare for the meeting and make valuable contributions for team effectiveness. Effective teams minute their meetings, noting action points with copies sent to Senior Management and to each team member.
- The team develops a climate in which people feel relaxed and are able to be direct and open in their communications.
- Team members develop a mutual trust for each other and believe that other team members have skills and capabilities to contribute to the team.
- Both the team and individual members are prepared to take risks and are allowed to develop their abilities and skills.
- The team is clear about its important goals and establishes performance targets that cause stretching but are achievable.
- Team member roles are defined, and effective ways to solve problems and communicate are developed and supported by all team members.
- Team members know how to examine team and individual errors and weaknesses without making personal attacks which enables the group to learn from its experiences.
- Team efforts are devoted to the achievement of results, and team performance is frequently evaluated to see where improvements can be made.
- The team has the capacity to create new ideas through group interaction. Good ideas are followed up, and people are rewarded for innovative risk taking.
- Each member of the team knows that he or she can influence the team agenda. There is a feeling of trust and equal influence among team members that facilitates open and honest communication.

Hence, team effectiveness can best be evaluated if the team develops a model of excellence against which to measure its performance. This means that the team leader has to understand and communicate to the team members the rationale, which underpins the work of the team in particular. Therefore, to appoint an effective team leader involves consideration of a number of factors, which will be considered in the following discussion.

2.3.3 Effective Team Leadership

It must be acknowledged that the leader of a team has a particular responsibility to ensure understanding of the values and aims of the school. The understanding of the team is dependent on the role of the team leader, therefore, to appoint a team leader involves consideration of:

“The culture of the wider organization; the familiarity of the team member with team working and the complexity of the team’s goal” [Chaudhry-Lawton et al. 1992, p.144].

According to Adams, [1987, p.98-106] there are several ways in which the team leader can contribute to creating a positive climate within the team. One of the most effective attributes of the team leader is to put forward, in cooperation with team members, an exciting vision of what the team is to achieve. Once the vision is developed, it needs to be kept in front of the team members by the leader as a reminder of what they wish to accomplish. The team leader can provide the leadership for helping the team develop an accepted set of principles that will contribute to their success. Included in this set of principles should be norms for operating within the group, criteria for evaluating success, standards for determining quality of performance, and recognition of the team’s success.

Three interlinking aspects of team leadership has been identified by Adair [1988, p.44]. Firstly, achievement of the task, whereby effective leaders need to have a major concern

for achieving the task and to be adaptable to match constantly to changing situations that might affect the team operation. Secondly, development and maintenance of the team, whereby it is important for team leaders to encourage and facilitate others to become leaders and take the initiative. Thirdly, development of the individual by which confidence and security in oneself is important. These three areas are not only linked but are interdependent. For example, if the team or its individual members are not functioning well it is likely that the task achievement will be impaired. It is agreed that, whilst all team members carry some responsibility for the three areas, the team leader is seen as holding a particular position and considered to be accountable to a higher authority and to the team.

It can be further acknowledged, that if the team leader is able to offer for example, expert problem-solving processes, then mutual learning is likely to occur during team management. Leithwood, [1996, p.15] reiterates that:

“Mutual adaptations by team members have combined effects on a team becoming capable of producing radical changes in the collective minds and patterns of action in the team.”

Thus, the skill for the team leader may well lie in recognizing that leadership of the team should rest with different people in different situations, and that different people who all have similar technical ability by roles in the school may bring different strengths and weaknesses to their roles in the team. An effective leader will clarify personal expectations within the team such as the hope to succeed and the willingness to engage in conflict in order to resolve disagreements based on certain ground rules such as encouraging team members to listen to others' views; to state a view and state it frankly; to be willing to challenge where views differ; to be sensitive to colleagues' feelings; to refrain from making personal attacks and to confine confrontation to meetings, if personal animosity does arise [[Middlewood ch.10 cited in Lumby et al. 2002, p.262-263].

Effective leadership ensures that problems that appear, are attended to immediately and not left to accumulate, because there is a danger of losing focus, once there is a delay in solving problems promptly. Therefore, it can be acknowledged that in teams operating within a collegial environment, expertise rather than status can determine the effectiveness of leadership in the team. For example, the Head of Department [H.O.D.] may count a member of the Senior Management of the school as a member of his/her team, or a team investigating a key area of development in a school maybe led by an individual who is not part of the traditional Senior Management Team.

A Head teacher, quoted in Jenkins, [1991, pp59-60] states that:

“Under functional management, a degree of ambiguity is introduced. An effective team leader maybe a simple team member in one function, but be exercising a large measure of direct responsibility in another...The key to success is to see the tasks clearly and to guide our actions by what needs to be done.”

Coleman and Bush [ch13 cited in Bush et al. 1994, p.277] therefore, reiterate that observation of the operation of the team, allows the leader to check the extent to which responsibility is shared within the team and whether they are working effectively together. The team leader needs to be supportive and sensitive in the event when membership may change over time. Hence, team members may need encouraging, reassuring and appreciating in order to establish and retain their membership in an active sense. Thus one of the principle strengths of an effective team leader is the generation of commitment to the work of the team and to the maintenance of relationships within the team.

2.4 Conclusion

It can be concluded that teams may not be the solution to every institution’s needs. Teams may not solve every problem, enhance every team’s results, nor help top management address every performance challenge. Moreover, when misapplied teams can be both wasteful and disruptive. However, the advantage of managing through

teams may claim to be aspiring, and likely to achieve effectiveness through excellent leadership and a high level of commitment from all team members.

The longer the team has worked together, the greater the sense of team identity. The theory of team management portrays effective teams as an attractive and empowering approach, appropriate for primary, but secondary schools in particular. The key test to effectiveness of any team in education is the extent to which its work is concerned with the immensely challenging task of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Hence, it is reiterated that teams remain an essential part of the fabric of educational management and should therefore, be managed effectively, if they attempt to balance the loyalties of team members towards effective teamwork.

In the following chapter an analysis of the research methods adopted in this study will be conducted.

CHAPTER THREE : RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methods adopted in this study. According to Holloway [1997, p.63] each approach in qualitative research has its own underlying principles, assumptions and procedures. Methodology allows the researcher to follow certain procedures in order to analyse data and also provides the researcher with the acceptable standards of conducting the research.

An analysis of the research methods employed in this study will be conducted with specific reference to the research goals; research questions; research methods; research participants; the technique deployed in the analysis of the data; the limitations of the research methods and the research instruments used.

3.2 Research Goals

The primary aim of the research was to assess the effectiveness of managing through formal teams at the secondary school, in accordance with the characteristics that constitutes effective teams. The main goals of the research therefore, were to:

- Collect data from the team leaders and the members of the formal teams.
- Explore the possibilities of managing through formal teams.
- Identify the characteristics of effective teams.
- Examine the role functions and composition of the formal teams at the school.

3.3 Research Questions

This study attempted to explore the following questions.

1. What does “managing through teams” mean?
2. What are the characteristics of effective teams?
3. What are the role functions and composition of the formal teams in the school?

4. What are the perceptions of team leaders in respect of their team's effectiveness?
5. What are the perceptions of team members of their team's effectiveness?
6. How effective are the formal teams and what recommendations might be made for improvements in team effectiveness?

3.4 Research Methods

Questions 1 and 2, which examine the concept of "managing through teams" and the characteristics of effective teams, will be addressed by reference to the relevant literature.

Question 3, which deals with the role functions and the composition of the formal teams in the school, will be addressed with reference to the school policy documentation in consultation with the principal and team leaders.

Question 4, examines the team leaders' perceptions in respect of their teams' effectiveness. Data for answering Question 4 will be derived via semi-structured interviews with team leaders and observation of team leaders at formal team meetings.

Question 5, examines the team members' perceptions in respect of their team leaders' and their team's effectiveness. This question will be addressed firstly, by means of observation of the formal team meetings and secondly, by means of a questionnaire containing closed and open items, which will be administered to all the members of the formal teams.

Question 6, determines the extent to which the effectiveness of formal teams at the school are evident. In addition, recommendations for improvements in team effectiveness will be explored. Answers to Question 6 will be drawn upon the findings obtained for Questions 3 to 5, analysed in the light of answers obtained for Questions 1 and 2 related to the literature.

3.5 Research Participants

According to De Vos [1998, p.46], qualitative research requires that the data to be collected must be rich in description of people participating in the study. As the research design allows one to analyse the relationship among the formal teams, the sample provided the researcher with a manageable and relevant unit of analysis from which reliable and valid data would be generated.

The study was carried out at a Secondary School over a period of two months. There were three formal teams in operation at the school with a total of twenty-one team members. For each team the leaders and all the members of the teams were included in the research. Thus, no sampling was required. Attention is drawn to the fact that the principal is the team leader for both the Senior Management and Middle Management Teams, and the Senior Deputy Principal is the leader of the Academic Subject Team, hence, reference to only two team leaders. The composition and the role functions of the teams are outlined below.

3.5.1 Composition and Role Functions of the Formal Teams

A. Senior Management Team

Comprises of 4 team members.

- a) The Principal
- b) The Senior Deputy Principal
- c) The Deputy Principal
- d) The Acting Deputy Principal

The Principal is the leader of the Senior Management Team. The role functions of the team are to take charge of the school management and the day- to – day activities of the school. This includes the implementation of the academic policy, procedures and the academic progress of learners; the development, promotion and control of the school's sports policy and programmes; and the control of cultural and ceremonial affairs at the school.

B. Middle Management Team

Comprises of 10 members as follows:

The Principal is the team leader.

5 Grade Heads: 1 per grade, ranging from grades 8 to 12.

1 Discipline Officer

1 Counselling Officer

1 Office Manager [in charge of Administration, Enrolments, Reports and Technology]

1 Staff representative, who is responsible for presenting staff matters at the Middle Management Team meetings.

The role functions of the Middle Management Team is to take responsibility for the organization of all aspects of pastoral care, control and development of each learner in the grade through the grade teachers; the creation of a caring environment through the counselling department; and the effective administration of the school's discipline system through the discipline officer.

C. Academic Subject Team

Comprises of 7 members as follows:

The Senior Deputy Principal is the team leader.

6 Subject Heads represent the following departments:

English

Physical Science

Afrikaans

Technical Subjects

Mathematics

O.B.E. Grades 8 and 9

The role functions of the Academic Subject Team is to take responsibility of curriculum matters, academic testing policy, improving the quality of teaching in the subjects, staff development and ensuring that the subject assessment policy is adhered to. The Subject Heads must apprise the subject team leader of any problem areas. [Reference: Information extracted from the School Documentation Policy and Procedures, revised January 2003, pp. 5-14]

3.6 Research Instruments

De Vos, [1998, p.43] indicates that the most widely used methods of data collection are observation, interviews and questionnaires. The research instruments, that were used to collect data for the purpose of this study was a semi-structured interview, observation of formal team meetings and a questionnaire. These methods are elaborated in the discussion that follows.

3.6.1 Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the key informants, which included the Principal and the Senior Deputy Principal as team leaders. The intention of conducting individual face-to-face interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of each informant's perception of whether the formal teams are functioning effectively and successfully. According to Warren et al. [1999, p.3] a semi-structured interview provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often provides valuable data that could not be obtained by any other means.

Questions were both general and specific based on team procedures, team effectiveness, and effective team leadership and to determine the extent to which team goals are achieved to maximum effect.

The interview schedule comprised 12 questions. [See Annexure B for details] The questions were carefully prepared together with a response sheet to record immediately what was said in the key areas of the prepared questions. The questions will be briefly outlined with a justification for each question.

Question 1 of the interview required answers from the team leaders about their views of managing through teams. The purpose of this question was to obtain a general idea of the possibilities and limitations of managing through teams.

Question 2 required an answer as to how team leaders felt about the way, in which their teams were functioning, in order to determine whether these formal teams are functioning effectively and successfully.

Question 3 asked if the School Policy Document outlining the composition and role functions of the formal teams were made available to the team members, in order to determine team effectiveness through team members who ought to be familiar with the Policy Document.

Question 4a addressed the complexities of creating time blocks convenient to all team members to have meetings. The reason for this question was to highlight the fact that the lack of time for formal meetings is usually an obstacle to establish effective teams.

Question 4b required answers to the question of having meetings at the end of the school day. The idea was to emphasize the need to avoid unnecessary disruption to the school day, hence, effective time management.

In **Question 5**, team leaders were asked if they found the need to have goals set for their teams and how this was done. The responses to this question would determine to what extent, clearly defined goals would enable the teams to function effectively. This ought to be done collaboratively by all team members so that they are committed to them.

Question 6, required the team leaders to indicate how they evaluate the effectiveness of their teams' performance and how often this is done, to determine whether team leaders review major issues regarding the teams' performance on a regular basis in order to achieve team goals.

Question 7, directed to the Academic Subject leader, required a reason for the exclusion of the Subject Heads of the Department of Commerce and Human and Social Sciences from membership of the formal Academic Subject Team. The aim of this question was to determine whether the team leader had envisaged what impact the absence of the two Subject Heads from the team would have on the effective management of their subjects.

Questions 8 and 9, questioned the areas of leadership skills of the team leaders. The aim was to determine whether they had good people skills, committed to developing a team approach, allowing flexibility and sharing leadership roles.

In **Question 10**, the team leaders' abilities to manage conflict among the team members was questioned. The aim was to determine the extent to which leaders examine the teams' weaknesses through negotiation.

Question 11, required the team leaders to explain what assurance they had to ensure that team decisions were being fully implemented. The aim was to determine whether team decisions were implemented to maximum effect and expressed in action.

Question 12, required information on how the team leaders cope when a member or members leave the team for whatever reason/s. The aim of this question was to determine what measures are taken to keep the team membership stable to ensure team effectiveness.

3.6.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaires were administered to all the members of the three formal teams, excluding the two team leaders. The total number of respondents was seventeen and the time frame for completion of the questionnaires was one week.

The questionnaire as a method of data collection tends to be more reliable, and because of its anonymity it encourages greater honesty. The questions listed were for a specific purpose in order to achieve the objectives.

The questionnaire was designed to include different types of items. [See Annexure C for details] These items are as follows: closed and open items; multiple choice questions in which the statement precedes a set of responses; rank ordering in which a list of factors is set out and respondents are required to place them in rank order, for example, from 1 to 6, with 1 being most important, and the Likert scales where the respondents indicate on the scale by either placing a tick or circling that position which most represents what the respondent feels [Cohen et al. 2000, pp. 253-257].

The questionnaire was comprised of three sections as follows:

Section A required general information on Formal Team procedures.

Section B required information on the Effectiveness of Team Performance.

Section C required information on the Effectiveness of Leadership of Formal Teams. In sections B and C concession was made for the respondents to respond to open-ended questions beyond the given alternatives by including the category, "Comments if any". These responses may contain the 'gems' of information, honesty and candour that otherwise might not have been captured in the questionnaire.

3.6.3 Observation

The main objective of using observation for this study was to verify and substantiate responses provided in the interviews and questionnaires. Observational data affords the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from 'live' situations. The researcher is given the opportunity to look at what is taking place *in situ* rather than second-hand [Carspecken, 1996, p.47]. Observation also helps the researcher to discover things that participants might not freely talk about in an interview or reflect in the questionnaire.

The researcher was a non-participant observer and occupied a seat at the various meeting venues as unobtrusive as possible. However a clear view of the team leader and all the participants was ensured. According to Nisbet and Watt, [1980, p.13] direct observation can often reveal characteristics of groups or individuals which would have been impossible to discover by other means. It is also useful to discover whether people do what they say they do.

The observation of the three formal meetings took place over a two-month period at the Secondary School. The school operates on a ten-day cycle. The Senior Management Team meetings are convened on day one and day six in a cycle, which enabled the researcher to observe five meetings. The Middle Management Team meetings are convened on day five and day ten in a cycle, which enabled the researcher to observe five meetings. The Academic Subject Team meetings are convened once, on day nine of a cycle, which enabled the researcher to observe three meetings.

A structured observation schedule, [See Chapter Four for details] planned in advance was used, based on the criteria for effective teams. The role of the researcher was to observe each Formal Team meeting and record in as objective a way as possible guided by the observation schedule. Each criterion listed, was analysed during the meetings and the relevant entries were made by means of a tick in the appropriate column. A rating according to a four- point scale was used as a basis to assess the effectiveness of the teams. The key for the scale used was represented as follows: 1- Often; 2- Sometimes; 3-Hardly ever; 4-Not at all. A separate schedule, containing the same criteria and rating scale was used for each of the three Formal Teams using the numbers 1 to 5 to indicate each observation session.

3.7 Limitations of Design and Methodology

In order to evaluate the study's findings and recommendations, the potential methodological limitations must be considered. The limitations of various data collection methods have possible consequences on the interpretation of results and thus should be acknowledged and efforts made to minimize their effects. The following limitations need to be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

3.7.1 Interviews

One of the major disadvantages of the face-to-face interview is that it can be time consuming. In this study each interview conducted, took approximately one hour. Fortunately, this did not impinge on the number of interviews conducted, due to the fact that only two team leaders were interviewed, since one team leader controlled two teams. However, it is possible that during the interview, the interviewer may misinterpret what the interviewee is saying as a result incorrect answers may be recorded. Clearly, face-to-face interviews are obviously limited to the spoken word and to the inferences made by the interviewer [Cohen et al. 2000, p.282].

There is always the danger of bias creeping into interviews, largely because interviewers are human beings and their manner may have an effect on the respondents. However, if one researcher conducts an interview [as was the case in this research], the bias maybe consistent and go unnoticed. Hence, interviewing can be a challenge, since many researchers have not found it easy to strike a balance between complete objectivity and trying to put the interviewee at ease [Bell, 1987, p.95].

3.7.2 Questionnaire

The principle disadvantage of the questionnaire is that it will always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent, be it in terms of time taken to complete the questionnaire, the level of threat or sensitivity of the questions or the possible invasion of privacy. Due to the fact that respondents cannot be coerced into completing a questionnaire, they could withdraw from the research at any time, which could adversely affect the data collection, and the analysis, and this has implications for the interpretation of the findings. The researcher has to ensure that a well-designed questionnaire is produced to elicit the information needed and one that is acceptable to the respondents. Therefore, constructing questions demands close attention.

3.7.3 Observation

According to Nisbet, [1977, p.15] careful planning is essential, since observation is a skilled activity for which an extensive background knowledge and understanding is required as well as the ability to spot significant events. The main limitation of observation is that observers will have their own particular focus and interpret significant events in their own way. A major problem with this method is that writing up notes as soon as possible after the observation is not easy to manage, as this is time-consuming. A further limitation is the danger of bias especially if the researcher is very familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the respondents and

this familiarity may cause the researcher to overlook aspects of behaviour, which is immediately apparent to a non-observer. The researcher needs to also be aware of having pre-conceived ideas and prejudices. Another limitation of observation is the presence of the researcher, which may influence the way the participants behave, therefore, the researcher should be seated as unobtrusive as possible [Shaw, 1978, p.21].

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter the nature of research undertaken at the particular Secondary School was described and discussed. The main research methods used were observation, interviews and the questionnaire. The research participants comprised of the Principal and Senior Deputy Principal as the team leaders, and the members of the formal teams. The discussion also outlined the limitations of the design and methodology. The construction of the research instruments was assessed with regard to the provision of a justification for most questions. Hence, an explanation was rendered about how data and evidence were collected in the undertaking of this research on the effectiveness of formal teams.

The next chapter provides a report of the main findings that were obtained, using the methodology discussed above, in this research.

CHAPTER FOUR : PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In summary, this study was designed to investigate the Effectiveness of Managing Through Teams in a Secondary School. The research participants played a significant role in attempting to provide the necessary data required for the analysis of the study. Hence, the research participants included the two Team Leaders and sixteen Team Members of the three Formal Teams. The information collected from the various research instruments used, [Observation, Interview and Questionnaire] is discussed in this chapter. The information is based firstly, on the perceptions of team leaders in respect of their team's effectiveness and secondly, on the perceptions of team members in respect of their team's effectiveness. The presentation of the findings will be discussed in relation to the literature contained in Chapter Two.

4.2 Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted with the Principal, who is the Team Leader of both the Senior Management and Middle Management Formal Teams, and the Senior Deputy Principal, who is the Team Leader of the Academic Subject Team. The researcher reassured the participants that all the information disclosed will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used solely for the purpose of the research study.

4.2.1 Interview Questions and Responses

Question 1: What are your views about managing through teams?

Both team leaders agreed that managing through teams was very useful, since "many hands make light work". The principal pointed out that there were striking weaknesses in both his formal teams and he depended upon his team members to address these issues in order to bring out the best in the teams. The leader of the Subject Team

acknowledged that in most cases he implemented the opinions of three team members in particular, because the rest of the team “tend to agree with everything without giving much thought”.

Question 2: How do you feel about the way in which your team/s is/are functioning?

The principal acknowledged the decline of enthusiasm and loyalty with the Senior Management Team, because his team members have “lost sight of the team’s goals in order to pursue their own personal goals”. He also pointed out that the Middle Management Team was functioning at an average level due to the fact that the team was not cohesive. The Subject Team leader found his team “serving the purpose well”. Team members propose new, reasonable ideas, which are accepted by the team. Efforts are made by both leaders to improve their teams’ success.

Question 3: Has the School Policy Document, outlining the role functions of Formal Teams, been made available to the team members?

Both team leaders acknowledge the availability of a copy of this document to every member. The Subject Team leader reiterated that all team members needed to peruse through this document on an ongoing basis in order to be reminded of their duties.

Question 4a: How do you address the complexities of creating blocks of time convenient to all team members to attend meetings?

The principal pointed out that Formal Team meetings were scheduled at the beginning of the year, and plotted on the school timetable. The Senior Management meetings are held at a time convenient to all management members. The Middle Management Team meetings are convened every Fridays between 08:00 to 09:00, during which the class teachers conduct control tests to enable the Grade Heads to be available for the meetings. The Subject Team leader convenes his team meeting during the one- hour tea break, which results in team problems being attended to between meetings due to time constraints, since the Subject Heads have to continue with their classroom duties after the break.

Question 4b: What are the members' views about having team meetings after school?

Both team leaders stated that team meetings held after school was totally disliked by the team members. Due to time constraints and priorities that members have in the normal course of their work such as extra-curricular activities, marking and classroom obligations, "they are too exhausted to attend meetings at the end of the day".

Question 5: Do you see the need to have goals set for your team/s and how is this done?

Both leaders acknowledged the importance of setting team goals. The principal states that both his teams' goals are directly based on the teams' vision, which are set before hand by all team members. However, the team members do not wholly commit to the goals therefore, both the teams experience difficulty in achieving effectiveness. The Subject Team leader draws up his team's goals, which are "imposed" by him. He points out that some of the goals maybe difficult to attain, nevertheless, he encourages the members to pursue them especially those related to specific subjects.

Question 6: How often do you evaluate whether your team/s is/are performing effectively?

The Senior Management and Middle Management Teams are not evaluated regularly. The principal expressed his concern that evaluating the effectiveness of his teams' performance "has been neglected", and that he could have done more in this regard. The Subject Team leader gets a feedback on a regular basis. He observes classroom performance by subject teachers to "check if Subject Heads are carrying out their team role functions effectively.

Question 7: Why are the Subject Heads representing the Departments of Commerce and Human and Social Sciences excluded from the Academic Subject Team?

The Subject leader pointed out that his team needs to have one representative from the four compulsory subjects, which was implemented this year.. This includes the Heads of the four compulsory subjects, namely, English, Afrikaans, Mathematics and Physics as well as the Heads of the Technical subjects and Outcomes Based Education [O.B.E.]

for grades 8 and 9. The leader stated that if all seventeen subjects, offered at the school, are represented on the team, his team will be “extra large” to manage.

Question 8: What leadership skills do you think you possess that contributes to effective teamwork?

Both team leaders express their ability to enjoy good human relations and to have empathy for their team members. Both are goal- oriented leaders who strive to motivate their teams towards achieving the teams’ goals. The principal feels that he is not assertive enough, does not delegate enough and ‘ feels down’ when the team members are not working. The Subject Team leader states “he is complimented by his team on his leadership”.

Question 9: Are your team members given the opportunity to chair team meetings?

The Subject Team leader states that he has always chaired meetings because the team members believe that “ leadership duties are the responsibility of the leader”. The team leader has attempted to share the leadership role but to no avail. The principal states that he maintains situational leadership for both his formal teams. He gives members with the relevant expertise the opportunity to share leadership skills.

Question 10: How do you manage conflict among team members?

Both team leaders state that they have experienced little or no conflict. Usually personal issues are dealt with in the office, focusing on the issue and not the member’s personality. However, if conflict arises over a decision, the principal intercedes by imposing the final decision.

Question 11: How do you ensure that decisions taken at team meetings are implemented?

The principal states that there is no follow up on the implementation of decisions. He assesses from the previous minutes recorded if matters decided have been attended to. He also assesses twice a year during the appraisal programme. The Subject Team leader ensures that all team members understand decisions taken. He relies on the Subject Heads to ensure that these decisions are being implemented, and to report any problems experienced.

Question 12: How do you cope when a member leaves the team for whatever reason?

Both leaders feel that they have the flexibility to involve other members as needed. The principal states that he distributes that member's workload among the team members until he selects another appropriate team member with the relevant experience. Due to the School Management Structure, staff members cannot volunteer to serve on the team. The Subject Team leader substitutes a member from the same Subject Department where the vacancy exists.

4.2.2 Findings

Evidence shows the great challenges the team leaders are faced with, to ensure that they achieve the best from their teams at all times. Good leadership skills are essential for effective team performance. It is clear that monitoring team performance and evaluating team achievements by the team leaders are not sufficient enough for team effectiveness. In general, teams are ineffective because they are not properly managed. There are certain instances, which suggest that the Senior Management and Middle Management Team members could benefit in areas where team performance could be improved, if their team leader does regular evaluation. Evidence further indicates that the principal does not regularly follow up on the implementation of decisions taken at team meetings.

Although there is evidence that the Academic Subject Team is performing reasonably well, there is still room for improvement in terms of team effectiveness. There is some variance as to how well the leaders feel about their leadership roles in respect of their teams' effectiveness. Team meetings are chaired by the leaders despite their attempts to afford team members the opportunity to acquire leadership skills to subsequently become leaders of their own informal teams. It is also evident that the Academic Subject Team leader sets and imposes his own team goals irrespective of whether the team members are committed to them or not. The exclusion of the Subject Heads representing the Departments of Commerce and Human and Social Sciences, is an oversight by the team leader, who concentrates on the four compulsory subjects. One

significant finding is that both team leaders experience little or no conflict among team members.

4.3 Questionnaire Responses

Questionnaires were given to seventeen team members from the three Formal Teams of which only sixteen responded. The questionnaire was divided into three sections.

Section A consisted of 10 questions relating to Formal Team procedures.

Question 1: Tick the Formal Team you belong to.

The following number of respondents participated.

Senior Management Team	2 members
Middle Management Team	8 members
Academic Subject Team	6 members

Question 2: Do you find working in a team absolutely beneficial?

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement.

Strongly agree	9 respondents
Agree	6 respondents
Disagree	1 respondent

Question 3: Has the School Policy Document outlining the role functions of members made available to you?

Number of respondents who indicated YES 15

Number of respondents who indicated NO 1

Question 4: How are you informed of Formal Team meetings?

All the respondents indicated that formal team meetings are scheduled at the beginning of the year, indicating the days and times in accordance with the school's ten-day cycle operation.

Question 5: When are you given team meeting agendas?

Agenda handed at the meeting	15 respondents
No agenda is provided	1 respondent

Question 6: How satisfied are you with the performance of your team?

Respondents had to tick or circle their choice on a rating scale ranging from 0 to 10 with the following indicators: 0-2 Poor; 3-4 Fair; 5-6 Average; 7-8 Good and 9-10 Excellent.

Indication that team performance is Good	9 respondents
Indication that team performance is Average	4 respondents
Indication that team performance is Fair	3 respondents

Question 7: Is consideration given to the availability of every team member to attend team meetings?

Most of the time	8 respondents
All the time	8 respondents

Question 8: If you are given the opportunity to attend a training skill development course to become an effective leader, what will you decide?

Will definitely attend	15 respondents
Might attend	1 respondent

Question 9: Is your team based on the context of “all talk and no action”?

Respondents had to indicate their level of agreement.

Strongly agree	1 respondent
Agree	4 respondents
Not sure	2 respondents
Disagree	8 respondents
Strongly disagree	1 respondent

Question 10: Indicate the need for Senior Management support and awareness of what goes on in the team.

Absolutely necessary 15 respondents

Necessary 1 respondent

All teams seem to agree that management support and awareness is essential.

Section B consists of 10 questions relating to Team Effectiveness. Concession is also given for respondents to provide further comments.

Question 1: Does your team leader use the skills, knowledge and experiences of individuals in the team effectively?

A lot 3 respondents

A great deal 5 respondents

A little 6 respondents

Very little 2 respondents

Respondents commented further that the Middle Management team leader was autocratic and therefore did not utilize their expertise. Members are given responsibilities, however they are not according to the skills and experiences of the members.

Question 2: How would you rate the effectiveness of your team?

Very effective 4 respondents

A little effective 12 respondents

Comments from respondents indicate that the Middle Management team is not a cohesive group. The leader has not changed, there is no follow through on tasks to be done, decisions taken are not implemented because there are hardly any solutions to problems. Respondents of the Subject team indicate that their team leader is the driving force of the team, which is working well.

Question 3: Are your contributions at team meetings valued as a member?

Respondents had to indicate the frequency levels when this is done.

All the time	3 respondents
Often	6 respondents
Sometimes	3 respondents
Rarely	4 respondent

Comments from respondents of the Middle Management team indicate that their contributions are not valued all the time because the leader focuses on the negatives rather than the positives. Respondents of the Subject team indicate that action is positive on any contribution made by the members.

Question 4: Which factors do you consider to be the most beneficial for an effective team?

Respondents were give a list of factors and were required to list in order of preference from 1-6, 1 being the most beneficial. The following 6 factors were considered the most beneficial.

1. Recognition of success through positive feedback.
2. Sharing expertise and skills.
3. Maximizing use of resources.
4. Realising individual potential.
5. Increase participation of all members.
6. Encouraging decision- making.

Question 5: The goals in your team is set by:

The team leader	9 respondents
The Senior Management team	4 respondents
Team members	3 respondents

Question 6: How do you feel about the composition of your team?

Respondents were required to indicate their level of satisfaction about the composition of their teams.

Very satisfied	5 respondents
----------------	---------------

Satisfied	6 respondents
Dissatisfied	3 respondents
Very dissatisfied	2 respondents

Comments indicated that members were satisfied with the mix of people in the team. They were also satisfied that their teams had at least one representative from each key area. A few members expressed dissatisfaction that the allocation of tasks by the leader was not in-keeping with the talent and skills of certain members in the team.

Question 7: Has the team experienced conflict among team members?

No	12 respondents
Yes	4 respondents

Question 8: Those respondents who indicated **Yes** to question 7, commented that the leader allows the parties concerned to air their views. There's arbitration and mediation by the leader and the members concerned are given time to reflect and rejoin the meeting.

Question 9: How would you rate the consideration given by the members to listen to each member of the team?

Respondents had to indicate the level of consideration.

Very considerate	4 respondents
Considerate	10 respondents
Inconsiderate	2 respondents

Further comments indicate that the Middle management team members listen but often react to problems rather than solutions. Senior Management team is sometimes inconsiderate. The Academic Subject team members comment that all points are considered, if there is a difference in opinion, discussion takes place and a solution is sought.

Question 10 Required respondents to indicate the Strengths and Weaknesses of their teams in terms of effectiveness.

This was an open-ended question and the overall responses are illustrated below.

Teams Strengths

- The teams have wide varieties of personalities who provide diverse ways of approaching problem solving.
- Great deals of experiences are shared amongst the teams and are helpful in making decisions.
- Members are generally open-minded to paradigm shifts and the day- to- day efficiency of the school and they have good positive ideas.
- The teams want to succeed, there's loyalty to the cause and they show a genuine interest in doing what's best.
- Team members work together and listen to each other exhibiting good communication skills amongst members.

Teams Weaknesses

- Decisions taken at Middle Management meetings are generally not implemented neither is there a follow-up by the leader on most of the decisions taken. The Academic Subject team leader is doing insufficient follow-up especially with control tests.
- One or two members sometimes dominate the Academic Subject team meetings because others are reluctant to speak. There are also differences of opinions in the Middle Management meetings due to the mindset of key team members.
- Members are over-worked, therefore, there is insufficient time to follow through tasks given at Academic Subject meetings.
- There is a lack of an overall vision for the team resulting in the de-motivation of the members who tend to work "as an island" due to the tension in the Middle Management meetings.
- There is a lack of faith in the Middle Management team's ability to achieve goals since there's "too much talk and no action" and the allocation of duties to team members are incorrect.

Section C consists of 8 questions relating to Effective Leadership. Concession is also given to respondents to provide further comments.

Question 1: Have you been given the opportunity to be a leader at the meetings?

Respondents had to indicate how regular this was done.

When necessary	4 respondents
Not at all	11 respondents
Seldom	1 respondent

Further comments indicate that the Middle Management members do not take the initiative when offered the opportunity because of an element of laziness. Members of the Academic Subject team believe that their leader is efficient enough to chair the meetings.

Question 2: Are members allowed to express opinions about discrepancies in the team?

Respondents had to indicate how often this is allowed.

Often	2 respondents
All the time	5 respondents
Sometimes	5 respondents
Very seldom	2 respondent
Not at all	2 respondents

Question 3: How would you describe the leadership skills in the team?

Respondents had to choose one of the leadership styles indicated.

Dominating	1 respondent
Autocratic	2 respondents
Flexible	5 respondents
Passive	1 respondent
Democratic	7 respondents

Question 4: Does the leader make unrealistic demands on members?

Respondents had to indicate to what extent unrealistic demands are made on them.

A little	2 respondents
Very little	6 respondents
Not at all	5 respondents
A lot	1 respondent
A great deal	2 respondents

Question 5: Respondents were required to tick the appropriate boxes that best indicate the leaders' effectiveness.

The following factors chosen from a list of factors given were considered appropriate to describe their leaders' effectiveness.

1. Utilising the team members' talents and skills.
2. Useful feedback from team members.
3. Allowing a few members to make decisions.
4. Ensuring that the team goals are achieved.

Question 6: How often does the leader evaluate the effectiveness of the teams?

Respondents had to indicate the frequency of evaluation done.

All the time	2 respondents
Often	5 respondents
Seldom	5 respondents
Hardly ever	4 respondents

Further comments indicate that members acknowledge the importance of evaluation in order to keep their teams on track, but this is not done as often as it ought to be. There was some variance as to how well they felt the evaluation had been done.

Question 7: The team leader communicates clearly what the tasks are for the team:

Respondents had to indicate how often this occurs.

All the time	3 respondents
Often	6 respondents
Sometimes	6 respondents

Rarely I response

Further comments indicate that initial communication takes place but it is often not well defined and members are sometimes not informed of certain tasks. The respondents of the Academic Subject team are never in doubt as to what needs to be done because of their leader’s communication skill.

Question 8: If you have additional comments, please write them in the space below.

This was an open-ended question, which required the respondents to comment about anything relevant to the questionnaire.

Respondents of the Middle Management team indicated that their leader does not have a clear vision for the school and therefore he is unable to lead the team to accomplish the goals set. The team spends too much time on reactive management rather than proactive management. There is a lot of potential among team members that needs to be channelled in the right direction. One respondent described the Senior Management team as being “a living crisis, new blood might change the situation”. There is a breakdown in trust and faith in the team. Members need to find the problem and work on it.

4.3.1 Findings

Evidence reveals that the three Formal Teams to a certain extent have a shared commitment to common tasks. All the teams appear to be functioning through regular structured meetings. However, evidence shows that the Middle Management team is not performing effectively enough. The lack of follow-ups on decisions taken at meetings has been identified as one of the greatest obstacles to establishing an effective team. Evidence indicates that team members agree that management support and awareness is essential and it is vitally important for the leader to ensure that there is good communication feedback to all the members. They also desire greater skill in decision-making because they are unhappy with the way decisions are reached. Some members are concerned that too much time is wasted and others feel that important issues are simply unresolved.

R

Evaluation of team effectiveness by the leader is not being done on a regular basis therefore team members are reluctant to provide feedback. Although the Academic Subject team seems to be functioning fairly well the team members devote their efforts to achieving team goals, which are not easily attainable.

4.4 Observation Analysis

The researcher had the opportunity to observe 5 Senior Management Team meetings; 5 Middle Management Team meetings and 3 Subject Team meetings over a period of two months. The Senior Management and Middle Management Team meetings took place twice in a ten-day cycle and the Academic Subject Team took place once in a ten-day cycle. An observation schedule with the same criteria and rating scale was used for each of the Formal Teams, using the numbers 1 to 5 to indicate each observation session. The following schedules provide the final assessment of the observation analysis for each Formal Team.

Fig. 4.4.1 Final Observation Schedule for the Senior Management Team Meetings

<u>Criteria for Team Effectiveness</u>	1	2	3	4
Participation of all members	X			
Team harmony	X			
Implementation of decisions taken		X		
Providing an agenda beforehand				X
Recognition of feedback provided		X		
Ensuring team goals are achieved		X		
Providing solutions to problems		X		
Utilizing team members' expertise	X			
Sharing leadership roles		X		
Reviewing team effectiveness			X	

KEY: 1 = Often 2 = Sometimes 3 =Hardly ever 4 = Not at all

4.4.1 Findings of the Senior Management Team

From the evidence provided in Fig.4.4.1, it would appear that this team of 4 members is performing at an average level in terms of the criteria for team effectiveness. All the members participate at meetings and team harmony is evident. Items for the agenda is requested at the meetings and then discussed. Decisions taken at previous meetings are sometimes implemented. Team members are asked to provide solutions to problems encountered, which is not done very often. The leader hardly reviews team effectiveness, however there is a sharing of leadership roles sometimes. The leader assigns tasks to the members by utilizing their skills and expertise. The leader would now and then ensure that team goals are achieved.

Fig. 4.4.2 Final Observation Schedule for the Middle Management Team Meetings

<u>Criteria for Team Effectiveness</u>	1	2	3	4
Participation of all members	X			
Team harmony			X	
Implementation of decisions taken			X	
Providing an agenda beforehand			X	
Recognition of feedback provided		X		
Ensuring team goals are achieved			X	
Providing solutions to problems		X		
Utilizing team members' expertise		X		
Sharing leadership roles				X
Reviewing team effectiveness			X	

KEY: 1 = Often 2 = Sometimes 3 = Hardly ever 4 = Not at all

4.4.2 Findings of the Middle Management Team Meetings

From the evidence provided in Fig.4.4.2, there is a clear indication that team members participate actively at the meetings, however, socialization amongst members hardly exist. A significant finding is that an agenda is not provided beforehand so members are

expected to provide items for discussion on the spur of the moment. Copies of minutes of meetings are not given to members; instead the leader would highlight issues arising from previous meetings from one available copy, which are discussed. Although decisions taken are implemented to a minimum, members apologize for not carrying out tasks that ought to have been done before the next meeting. Ensuring that team goals are being achieved and reviewing team effectiveness is hardly carried out. Members do provide solutions to some problems sometimes and feedback given is sometimes recognized. It has been observed that leadership roles are not shared, the team leader chairs all the meetings. Team members do have talent and skills, which are sometimes utilized to advantage.

Fig. 4.4.3 Final Observation Schedule for the Academic Subject Team Meetings

<u>Criteria for Team Effectiveness</u>	1	2	3	4
Participation of all members	X			
Team harmony	X			
Implementation of decisions taken	X			
Providing an agenda beforehand				X
Recognition of feedback provided	X			
Ensuring team goals are achieved		X		
Providing solutions to problems	X			
Utilizing team members' expertise	X			
Sharing leadership roles				X
Reviewing team effectiveness		X		

KEY: 1 = Often 2 = Sometimes 3 = Hardly ever 4 = Not at all

4.4.3 Findings of the Academic Subject Team Meetings

Evidence provided in Fig.4.4.3 indicates that this team is generally performing well with the exception of a few areas that need attention with regard to team effectiveness. Decisions taken at meetings are implemented often and the leader acknowledges

feedback by members. The members work in harmony to provide solutions to problems although each member represented on the team is drawn from the different subject departments. However, a significant observation is the absence of the subject representatives from the Departments of Commerce and Human and Social Sciences. In achieving team goals, which are imposed by the team leader, members tend to experience difficulty in realizing these goals because they are unattainable in a short-term period. Observation reveals further, that the leader chairs all team meetings and review of team effectiveness is done sometimes through the Subject Heads. An agenda is provided at the meeting, with matters for discussion, which are seen by members for the first time.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the findings from the interview, questionnaire and observation were presented and discussed. In the following chapter the main findings regarding the effectiveness of formal teams at the school will be summarized and this will be followed by recommendations to improve the quality of effective teams.



CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The main findings of the Interview, Questionnaire and Observation will be summarized. In addition, a summary of the original research questions will be discussed and this will be followed by some recommendations, which suggest ways to improve team effectiveness.

5.2 Summary of the Main Findings

This research is illuminative in respect of the effectiveness of Formal Teams at the Secondary School. Perceptions of team effectiveness have been investigated with a view to assessing the extent to which these approximate to the characteristics of effective teams, with a focus on effective team leadership, and team effectiveness. The main findings of the research will be discussed according to the research questions.

Questions 1 and 2 questioned the concept of managing through teams and the characteristics of effective teams. These questions were explored in the 'Related Literature' contained in Chapter Two, which served to highlight issues such as the purpose of managing through teams, the nature, and composition of teams as well as the contribution to effective teams. The characteristics of effective teams and effective leadership are also explored in the literature.

Question 3 examined the role functions and the composition of the formal teams at the school. There is the notion that it is possible to identify why some teams perform more effectively than others. It is because of the composition of the teams that take into account the size of the team, the skills possessed by the individual members and the range of behaviours that has an impact on the team's performance. The Senior Management Team comprises of four members and the literature suggests that teams of four tend to be leaderless and unstable at times of crisis. According to the related literature, Tansley [1989, p.148] suggests that teams of eight to ten are ideal enough to

give variety, and to retain intimate team identity, by bringing together the range of skills and approaches that lead to significant enhancement of problem solving, creativity and enthusiasm.

Question 4 examined the perceptions of team leaders in respect of their team's effectiveness, by conducting an interview. It is clear that monitoring team performance and evaluating team achievements by the leaders are not sufficient enough for team effectiveness. There are instances, which suggest that the Middle Management Team members could benefit in areas where team performance could be improved if the team leader does regular evaluation. There is also some variance as to how well the leaders feel about their leadership roles in respect of their team's effectiveness. Team goals are set and imposed by the leaders themselves and members have indicated that most of these goals are not attainable in a short- term period. The Middle Management Team leader indicted the difficulty he experiences in seeking support from the team members to implement decisions taken. Further findings reveal that the exclusion of the Subject Heads representing the Departments of Commerce and Human and Social Sciences is envisaged as having an impact on the effective management of these two subject departments, indirectly affecting the academic standard of the institution.

Question 5 examined the perceptions of team members in respect of their team's effectiveness by means of a questionnaire and through observation. The findings reveal that the lack of follow- ups on decisions taken at meetings has been identified as one of the greatest obstacles to establishing an effective team. Feedback appears to be superficial and the contributions are from a few members only. They desire greater skills in decision-making and resolving issues and have indicated their concerns about the lack of skills development and therefore, requested for training programmes to expand their knowledge, talents and expertise to enhance team effectiveness. The general impression created is that the Middle Management Team is functioning with a team of people whose allocation of duties are not in-keeping with the their range of abilities and talents. Observation has indicated further that the members of this team display an attitude that lacks the enthusiasm a team needs to function effectively.

Although the Academic Subject Team and Senior Management Team appear to be working fairly well, both teams do have room for improvement in terms of team effectiveness.

Question 6 examined the effectiveness of the formal teams at the school. One of the main findings of managing through teams at the school is that all three teams seem to be functioning below their potential due to many other factors affecting their team performance. It would appear that the team members of the Middle Management Team spend too little time solving problems and formulating solutions and too much time debating issues over which they have no control. The team leaders generally spend insufficient time reinforcing and reviewing team performance. It is acknowledged that the principal has the most complicated role both as a manager and a team leader. Observation indicates that matters for discussion are drawn up at the meeting, resulting in team members being inadequately prepared to make valuable contributions. Problem solving seems to rest in the hands of the team leaders with the final decisions communicated by the leaders.

5.3 Recommendations

In the light of the findings and the conclusions inferred thereof, the following recommendations are suggested.

- An effective team with established goals has a clear purpose, which ought to be known by all team members, who need to understand that patience is required, because some goals need long-term commitment. Therefore, the following aspects need to be borne in mind by both the school team leaders when goals for the teams are being set. Where do the team goals come from? Does everyone in the team agree on them? Are they attainable over a given period of time? Are they written down as a constant reminder to members? Do they have Management agreement? Are they part of the School Policy Document? However, it is suggested the teams be clear about the important goals and establish performance targets that cause stretching but are achievable.

- When there are problems in the team, as it is with the Middle Management Team, it is recommended that the team leader ensures that problems, which appear in the team are attended to immediately and not left to accumulate because there is a danger of losing focus once there is a delay in solving problems promptly.
- All the members of the Middle Management Team need to be involved in discussing issues thoroughly, giving everyone a chance to be heard and helping the meeting to run smoothly. The team needs the expertise and effort of all the members if it is to reach the best decisions, especially when there is disagreement about issues.
- Members of all three formal teams need to depend on one another for feedback in order to accomplish the team's goals. Providing continuous feedback is one of the most crucial elements for teams to be effective.
- It is suggested that the three formal team meetings be chaired to an agenda handed out to the team members at least a day or two before the meetings to allow team members to prepare for the meeting in order to make valuable contributions for team effectiveness.
- The team leader of the Academic Subject Team needs to envisage what impact the absence of the two Subject Heads from the Departments of Commerce and Human and Social Sciences has on the effective management of the respective subject departments. It is recommended that the team have at least one representative from the eight Learning Areas in order to acknowledge team effectiveness by monitoring the overall academic success.
- The Senior Management Team should meet at least once a month to review the successes and problems of the formal teams in order to establish whether these teams are performing effectively. By reviewing team effectiveness, the teams are kept on track instead of digressing. A further recommendation is that evaluation of all three teams be done at the end of each meeting to assess the team's progress more comprehensively and re-adjust the team's activities accordingly, which will lead to increased productivity and team cooperation.

- The Middle Management Team identified many weaknesses. It is suggested that the team leader offer the team the opportunity to work through the barriers and develop steps that could be taken to improve their performance, in view of the fact that one of the principle strengths of effective teamwork is the maintenance of relationships within the team.
- It is recommended that if each member participates in problem solving, the potential ways problems can be solved are increased. Team members are more likely to support and implement the quality of decisions made because more than one individual's perspective is involved, therefore they are more likely to adhere to the implementation that they have created for themselves, as opposed to those forced upon them.
- It is acknowledged that the Principal as a team leader chairs all the meetings because carrying out these responsibilities requires leadership and management skills, which the Principal is empowered with. However, it is recommended that there should be willingness by the team leader to defer and allow other team members the opportunity to assume leadership roles since the team members need the mentoring and guidance to achieve rather than to be directed all the time.

5.4 Conclusion

As it is stated in the 'Related Literature' contained in Chapter Two, working through teams that are effectively managed, provides a powerful opportunity to meet the novel changes which South African schools undoubtedly face. 'Since this novelty rests in turning away from hierarchy and individual autocracy', effective formal teams are surely something all secondary school managers cannot ignore [Leithwood, 1996, p.28]. Given the situation at the turn of the century with an emphasis upon staff empowerment and involvement, an optimistic view would be that South African secondary schools might offer the opportunities for genuine formal teams to develop within them.

It can be concluded that teams may not be the solution to every institution's needs. Teams may not solve every problem, enhance every team's results, nor help Senior Management address every performance challenge.

Nevertheless, the advantage of managing through teams may claim to be aspiring, and likely to achieve effectiveness through excellent leadership and a high level of commitment from all team members.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Adair, J. [1988] *Effective Leadership*, London: Pan Books.
- Adams, J.D. [1988] "The Role of the Creative Outlook in Effective Team Building", pp.98 – 106. Institute for Applied Behavioural Science: University Associates, Inc; Retrieved 19 May 2003 from <http://www.Ianr.Unl.edu/pubs/Misc/cc352.htm>.
- Belbin, M. [1981] *Management Teams: Why They Succeed or Fail*, London : Heinemann.
- Belbin, M. [1993] *Team Roles at Work*, London: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Bell, J. [1993] *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First- Time Researchers in Education and Social Science*, Open University Press: Buckingham.
- Bell, L. [1992] *Managing Teams in Secondary Schools*, London: Routledge.
- Best, J.W. & Khan, J.V. [1986] *Research in Education, 5th edition*, The United States of America: Prentice Hall.
- Bolam, R; McMahon, A; Pocklington,K. & Weindling, D. [1993] *Effective Management in Schools, a Report for the Department for Education Via the School Management Task Force Professional Working Party*, London: HMSO.
- Carspecken, P.F. [1996] *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*. London: Routledge.
- Chaudhry-Lawton, R; Lawton, R; Murphy, K. and Terry, A. [1992] *Quality: Change Through Teamwork*, London: Century Business.
- Cohen, L; Manion,L. & Morrison, K. [2000] *Research Methods in Education, 5th ed.* Routledge: Falmer London.
- Coleman, M. & Bush, T. [1994] 'Managing with Teams' in Bush, T. and West-Burnham, J. [eds] *Principles of Education Management*, Harlow, Longman.
- De Vos, A.S. [1998] *Research at grassroots: A primer for the caring Professions*. J.L. van Schaik Publishers.

- Everard, K.B. & Morris, G. [1990] *Effective School Management*, London: Paul Chapman.
- Early, P. & Fletcher-Campbell, F. [1987] *The Time to Manage: Department and Faculty Heads at Work*, Windsor: NFER-Nelson.
- Halloway, I. [1997] *Basic Concepts for Qualitative Research*. Blackwell Science.
- Handy, C. [1993] *Understanding Organisations*, London Penguin.
- Handy, C. & Aitken, R. [1986] *Understanding Schools as Organisations*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Jenkins, H.O. [1991] *Getting it Right: A Handbook for Successful Leadership*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Katzenbach, J. & Smith, D. [1993] *The Wisdom of Teams*, New York: Harper Business.
- Leithwood, K. [1996] *Doing business in restructuring schools: what is team Learning anyway?* 1996 Yearbook of Management and Administration, National Association of Professors of Educational Administration.
- Lumby, J; Middlewood, D. & Kaabwe, S. [eds] [2002] *Managing Resources in South African Schools*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Middlewood, D. & Lumby, J. [1998] *Human Resource Management in Schools And Colleges*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Nisbet, J.D. [1977] 'Small-scale research: guidelines and suggestions for Development' Scottish Educational Studies, 9 May, 13-17.
- Nisbet, J.D. & Watt, J. [1980] *Case Study Rediguide 26*, University of Nottingham School of Education.
- O' Neil, J. [1994] *Managing Through Teams*, Leicester, University of Leicester.
- Riches, C. [1994] 'Communication' chp.12 in Bush, T. and West-Burnham, J. [eds]. *Principles of Education Management*, Harlow, Longman.
- Sallis, E. [1997] *Total Quality Management in Education*, Second Edition,

- Kogan Page Ltd.
- Schein, E. [1988] *Organisational Psychology*, third edition. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. :Prentice Hall.
- Sinclair, A. [1992] '*The Tyranny of a Team Ideology*', *Organisation Studies*, 13, 4, pp. 611-626.
- Tansley, P. [1989] *Course Teams, The Way Forward in FE?* Windsor: NFER-Nelson.
- Trethowan, D. [1985] *Teamwork*, The Industrial Society.
- Tuckman, B.W. [1985] '*Developmental Sequence in Small Groups*' *Psychological Bulletin*, 63.
- Wallace, M & Hall, V. [1994] *Inside the SMT, Teamwork in Secondary School Management*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Warren L. & O' Connor, E. [1999] *Stepping out of the Shadows*, Women in Educational Management in Ireland, Dublin: Oak Tree Press.
- West-Burnham, J. [1992a] *Managing Quality in Schools*, Harlow: Longman.
- West-Burnham, J; Bush, T; O'Neil, J; Glover, D. [1995] *Management Teams in Education Part 1*, London: Pitman.
- Williams, G.L. [1984] *Making Your Meetings More Interesting and Effective*. Sheffield City Polytechnic, Pavic Publications.
- Young, D; Young, F; & young, D. [1979] *Improving Work Groups: A Practical Manual for Team Building*. University Associates, Inc; California. Retrieved 19 May 2003 from:
<http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/Misc/cc352.htm>.

ANNEXURE A

Document granting permission to conduct the research study at a school in the Pinetown District.

Mrs. M. Pillay
Department of Educational Studies
University of Natal
Durban
April 2003.

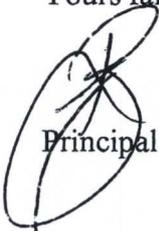
Dear Mrs. Pillay

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT MINI-RESEARCH

Kindly be informed that the Management and Staff of a Secondary School in the Pinetown District, has no objection to you conducting a mini-research at the institution for the period 01 May 2003 to 30 June 2003.

All arrangements to conduct your research must be made through the Principal of the school.

Yours faithfully,



Principal

ANNEXURE B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEAM LEADERS

1. What are your views about managing through teams?
2. How do you feel about the way in which your team/s is/are functioning?
3. Has the School Policy Document, outlining the role functions of Formal Teams, been made available to the team members?
 - 4a. How do you address the complexities of creating blocks of time convenient to all team members to attend meetings?
 - 4b. What are the members' views about having team meetings after school?
5. Do you see the need to have goals set for your team and how is this done?
6. How do you evaluate whether your team/s is/are performing effectively?
7. Why are the Subject Heads representing the Departments of Commerce and Human and Social Sciences excluded from the Academic Subject Team?
8. What leadership skills do you think you possess that contribute to effective teamwork?
9. Are your team members given the opportunity to chair team meetings?
10. How do you manage conflict among team members?
11. How do you ensure that decisions taken at team meetings are implemented?
12. How do you cope when a team member leaves the team for whatever reason?

JUSTIFICATION FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. To obtain a general idea of what the possibilities or limitations are of managing through teams.
2. To determine whether these formal teams are functioning effectively and successfully or are they ineffective.
3. For team effectiveness, all members of formal teams should be familiar with the School Policy Document.
 - 4a. Lack of time for formal team meetings is usually an obstacle to establish effective teams.
 - 4b. There is a need to ascertain time management.
5. In order for formal teams to function effectively, they must have clearly defined goals to which all team members are committed and this is done collaboratively with the team leader and all the team members.
6. For effective team performance there should be achievement of team goals, active participation of members, maximizing the use of abilities of team members. Effective teams must review major issues regarding the team operation.
7. All subject heads ought to be represented on the Academic Subject Team in order to ensure effective management of the overall academic performance of all the different subjects offered at the school.
8. To determine whether the leader has good human relations, is committed to developing a team approach and allowing time for team-building activities, is supportive, can make judgements and direct the team.

9. The team leader does not have to be at the head all the time, he/she can also be a member of the team. To determine whether the leader allows other team members to assume control according to the needs of the situation, since effective team management is a shared responsibility.
10. To determine whether the leader looks at team and individual errors and weaknesses through negotiation, because difficult problems are not avoided but handled positively.
11. Effective teams make the best decisions. To determine whether decisions taken at team meetings are being implemented to maximum effect, since decisions are expressed in terms of action.
12. When a team has worked together for a long time there is a greater sense of team identity. Stability of membership is also important for team effectiveness. This has certain implications for team leaders in selecting the appropriate replacements to enhance team effectiveness.

ANNEXURE C**THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**QUESTIONNAIRE BASED ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
FORMAL TEAMS IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE
PINETOWN DISTRICT OF THE KWAZULU NATAL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS DESIGNED TO MAKE COMPLETION AS EASY AS POSSIBLE.

MOST QUESTIONS CAN BE ANSWERED BY SIMPLY TICKING BOXES.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE HAS THREE SECTIONS:

SECTION A: REQUIRES GENERAL INFORMATION ON FORMAL TEAM PROCEDURES.

SECTION B: REQUIRES INFORMATION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FORMAL TEAM PERFORMANCE.

SECTION C: REQUIRES INFORMATION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP OF FORMAL TEAMS.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE, AND THEREFORE, YOU ARE AT LIBERTY TO BE AS HONEST AND AS CANDID AS POSSIBLE. FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENT, PLEASE USE THE SPACE PROVIDED AT THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION.

MRS. M. PILLAY

SECTION A : GENERAL INFORMATION

Q1 Please tick in the appropriate box, the Formal Team you belong to.

Senior Management Team

Middle Management Team

Subject {Learning Area} Team

Q2 Do you find working in a team absolutely beneficial?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I don't know

Q3 Has the School Policy Document, outlining the role functions of members of Formal Teams, been made available to you?

YES

NO

NOT AWARE OF ONE

Q4 How are you informed of formal team meetings?

Read it on the Staff Notice Board

Staff announcement

Personally informed by the Team Leader

By means of a circular

Specify Other: _____

Q5 When are you given your team meeting agenda?

Given in advance of the meeting

Handed out at the meeting

Drawn up at the meeting

No agenda is provided

Q6 How satisfied are you with the performance of your team?
Please rate from 0 - 10 by placing a tick or circling your choice.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 POOR FAIR AVERAGE GOOD EXCELLENT

Q7 Is consideration given to the availability of every Team member to attend the team meeting?

Not at all	Seldom	Most of the time	All the time	Not sure

Q8 If you are given the opportunity to attend a training skill development course to become an effective team leader, what will you decide?

Definitely attend	Might attend	Not sure	Will not attend	Not interested

Q9 Is your team based on the context of "all talk and no action?"

Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Q10 Please tick the appropriate box that best represents your view about the need for Senior Management support and awareness of what goes on in the team.

Absolutely necessary
Necessary
Unnecessary
Not Sure

SECTION B: TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Q1 Does your team leader use the skills, knowledge and experiences of individuals in the team effectively?

A lot	A great deal	A little	Very little	Not at all

Comments if any: -----

Q2 How would you rate the effectiveness of your team?

Very effective	Effective	Not at all effective	Do not know

Comments if any: -----

Q3 Are your contributions at team meetings valued as a member of your team?

All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Not at all

Comments if any: -----

Q4 The following is a list of factors regarded as important for the effectiveness of a formal team. Write the numbers 1 to 6 in order of preference next to the factors you consider to be the most beneficial for an effective team, 1 being the most beneficial.

- * Socialisation with other team members
- * Maximising use of resources
- * Being supported through consultation
- * Recognition of success through positive feedback
- * Realising individual potential
- * Reduction of stress and anxiety
- * Increase participation of all members
- * Encouraging decision-making
- * Sharing expertise and skills

Q5 The goals in your team are set by:

- The team members themselves
- The leader of the team
- The Senior Management Team

Q6 How do you feel about the composition of your team?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not sure

Comments if any: -----

Q7 Has the team experienced conflict among team members?

YES

NO

Q8 If you have indicated YES in Q7, please specify 2 ways in which conflict is dealt with in your team.

Q9 How would you rate the consideration given by the team members to listen effectively to each member of the team?

Very considerate	Considerate	Inconsiderate	Adversely Critical

Comments if any: -----

Q10 Briefly indicate what you consider are the strengths and weaknesses of your team in terms of effectiveness.

STRENGTHS: _____

WEAKNESSES: _____

SECTION C : EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Q1 Have you been given the opportunity to be a leader at your team meetings?

Regularly	When necessary	Not at all	Not interested	Seldom

Comments if any: -----

Q2 Does the team leader allow members to express their opinions about discrepancies in the team?

Often	All the time	Sometimes	Very Seldom	Not at all

Comments if any: -----

Q3 How would you describe the leadership skills exercised in your team as being?

Dominating

[Leader has a commanding influence over the team]

Autocratic

[Leader is very dictatorial, takes absolute control of the team]

Flexible

[Leader is able to adapt easily to changing situations for the benefit of the team]

Passive

[Leader is not motivating enough. Offers no challenge or interest in the team]

Democratic

[Leader allows for equal opportunities for all team members]

Q4 Does the team leader make unrealistic demands on the members?

A little	Very little	Not at all	A lot	A great deal

Comments if any: -----

Q5 Please tick only the appropriate boxes that best indicate the team leader's effectiveness in ensuring the team's success.

- * Useful feedback from team members
- * Relationship with other teams
- * Providing support to individual members
- * Discussing problems openly
- * Utilising team members' talents and skills
- * Allowing a few members to make decisions
- * Ensuring that team goals are achieved
- * Focusing on the difficulties of personalities

Q6 How often does the team leader evaluate the effectiveness of the team's work?

All the time	Often	Seldom	Hardly ever	Not at all

Comments if any: -----

Q7 The team leader communicates clearly what the tasks are for the team.

All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

Comments if any: -----

Q8 If you have any additional comments relevant to the questionnaire, please write in the space below.
