

**A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF THE
PRINCIPAL AND DEPUTY PRINCIPAL IN DECISION
MAKING PROCESSES IN THREE RURAL SCHOOLS IN
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of
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DECLARATION

I, HLONIPHILE MBEDLA declare that the research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. This dissertation does not contain other person’s data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from another person. This dissertation does not contain other persons’ writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

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Signed.....

Date:

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR

I declare that this dissertation has been submitted with my approval.

Signed:

Dr Carol Thomson

Date:

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late aunt, Eunice Nomnambithi Mamjoli Hlophoyi who brought me up, took care of me, provided me with clothing and shelter from birth at the time when I was abandoned by my mother and father, sent me to school and paid school fees for me from grade one until I completed my teacher's course.

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ABSTRACT

Decision making is a key function of leadership. During Apartheid rule in South Africa, decision making in schools was determined at the national level. A principal's role was to implement those decisions. Post 1994, decision making has been decentralised and more participation and involvement of teachers, heads of department, deputy principals, principals and parents is encouraged in schools. The purpose of this study was to find out more about the role that the principal and deputy principal of a school play in decision making in a school, particularly rural schools, in this, the democratic era in which we all now live.

To achieve this aim, this research was conducted in the Umzimkulu district in KwaZulu-Natal in three schools, all in deep rural areas but selected for their accessibility to the school at which I work which is also situated in a remote rural area. From each school three participants were selected i.e. the principal, deputy principal and one Post Level one educator. This study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm and was qualitative in nature. Thus, to collect data, semi-structured interviews were the primary source. However, observations of one staff meeting per school were also conducted, and document analysis of minute books from previous staff meetings was undertaken to ensure an important level of trustworthiness of the data. No attempt has been made to generalise the findings as the participants were very few, but as under-resourced schools in remote areas constitute the majority of schools in this country, I believe that the study is warranted and that the findings have relevance for more schools than those in which the research was conducted.

The theoretical framework for this study is that of distributed leadership which considers the expertise of all stakeholders i.e. teachers, heads of department, deputy principals, principals, parents and learners, within a school, irrespective of the formal position or role they hold. This theory is characterised as a form of collective leadership in which all the stakeholders work together and learn from one another. This ensures participation of all the stakeholders in decision making.

The key findings of the study are that: a) there is variation in the degree to which principals and deputy principals share decision making; b) that educators are given greater opportunities to make autonomous decisions in extra mural activities and mundane aspects of school life, than they are around key policy areas; c) that hierarchical structures are still noticeable in all 3 schools in the study; and d) that the three most significant barriers to distributed leadership,

at least in the schools in this study, are: (i) the traditional belief that says the principal is ‘the boss’ of the school; (ii) the lack of trust by a principal in her/his staff to make and carry out decisions responsibly; and (iii) the sense of accountability a principal holds in terms of constructing her/himself as the only one who will be cross-questioned by the departmental officials if something goes wrong in the school.

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CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study is situated in the South African schooling context, with a particular emphasis given to primary, rural schools. The purpose of this study is to find what role the principals and deputy principals play in decision making in their schools. To contextualise this study, this chapter will briefly describe how decisions were made in South African schools before 1994, that is, before the dawning of a democratic dispensation, and also how far the present government has gone in the formulation of policies that encourage participation of decision making since 1994.

In South African schools during the apartheid regime, that is, before 1994, the decision making process was solely the responsibility of the principal. The South African educational system during apartheid employed highly centralized decision-making processes and well-developed decentralized structures through which to implement policy. Critics have argued that the apartheid-era system's "top-down" administration typically proceeded without the consultation or participation of those who implemented the decisions. Principals, for example, particularly those in schools serving Black learners, were viewed merely as implementers of decisions, not as administrators with "the opportunity to formulate or construct their own school policies, vision or mission" (Gallie, 1996, p. 4).

After the principal had taken a decision he would report to the staff about what should be done. To change this strategy of decision making, in 1992 the African National Congress (ANC) published 'A Policy Framework for Education and Training' which outlined the policy objectives for the education and training system (ANC, 1995) it hoped to implement once in power, which at that point was becoming more and more clear that this was the likely future political scenario. "In line with the ANC's commitment to the principle of stakeholder participation in the policy process, the Policy Framework was first released as a draft discussion document in January 1994, to broaden the public participation of the reconstruction and development of the education and training system" (ANC, 1995, p. 3). The ANC was determined to restructure the education system in order to bring an end to the experiences of exclusion from decision making that learners, teachers and parents had previously had and "which destroyed the culture of learning and good relationship between learners, teachers, principals and the education authorities. If the policy is to find public

acceptance and win the heart of the people, the process of policy-making in education and training must therefore be as open and participatory as possible” (*ibid*, p. 5).

After the democratic elections in 1994, the Government of National Unity called for the inclusion of various stakeholders in decision-making in general. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996c) puts it like this: “the elections of April 1994, which marked the formal end of apartheid rule and a shift from authoritarian to democratic rule in South Africa, introduced a new South African Constitution and included an unequivocal commitment to representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency and public involvement” (p. 47). The Constitution states that “participation, it is suggested, does not extend simply to the right to elect representatives but translates into the right to influence decisions” (*ibid*). This means that, in the context of schooling, teachers, parents and learners must also contribute to decision-making. Anderson (1998) cited in Lewis and Naidoo (2004, p. 7) argues that in the United States of America the argument is often made that “those closest to the action (educators and principals) and those with a direct stake (parents and learners) in schooling should have a strong voice in decisions.” Similarly, in the South African context, the Task Team Report on Educational Management (1996, p. 7) recommends that “schools should achieve self-management which is based on the understanding that decisions should be made by those who best understand the needs of learners and local community.” This report also indicates that studies have shown that “self-management can lead to greatly improved school effectiveness” (*ibid*). Importantly too, the Report recommends a need to move from authoritarian structures to participative management as it states that, “management should not be seen as being the task of the few, it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage in decision-making” (*ibid*, p. 4).

New educational policy thus emphasises the idea of partnerships between various stakeholders in education in order to provide quality education to learners. The National Department of Education, for example, calls on the national leaders of the labour unions to take decisions that involve the teachers. Similarly, Site Stewards are the representatives of the teachers in schools and therefore can make decisions on their behalf about the policies of the school and in fact all the decisions taken in the school. They must then give the teachers a report back on what ever final decisions were taken. The principal is expected to call the School Management Team (deputy principal and heads of department) and Site Stewards

when making decisions affecting the labour union's role, if it is not possible to call all the teachers together.

This principle of shared decision making can, therefore, be seen to underpin all the new educational policies and legislations introduced by the Government of National Unity to govern South African schools. Amongst those policies is also the South African Council of Educators Act (SACE) 31 of (2000) which states that "parents are the partners in education and therefore must have a say on how their children should be taught and must be given regular feed back about the progress of their children" (p. E17). Parents form part of the School Governing Body (SGB) and are involved in the appointment of teachers, a task formerly managed entirely by the relevant provincial and racially-based Department of Education, thus showing the extent to which new policy goes in including all stakeholders in decision-making. Also, in the National Educational Policy Act (NEPA) 27 of (1996) the Norms and Standards for Educators states that the educator will "make decisions appropriate to the level, manage learning in the classroom, carry out classroom administrative duties efficiently and participate in school decision-making structures, and must be a life long learner" (p. 47).

However, and this is the key 'problem' framing this study, the principal and his/her deputy, by virtue of their positions, can encourage or discourage participation in decision-making. Grant (2006), for example, argues that "anecdotal evidence points to management still being viewed as the task of a few, and not the responsibility of all the members of an educational organisation" (p. 513), hence, while policies now provide for, and support shared decision making by principals (particularly), in many schools little has changed since apartheid days. Understanding more about how and why this is the case is thus warranted, although how formal leadership is constituted in schools differs according to their size. For example, if a school has over 1000 learners that school will have 2 deputy principals and about 6 Heads of Department (HODs). If a school has less than 300 learners, however, that school does not qualify to have a deputy principal and will have only one HOD. But the Department of Education believes that for a school to be run smoothly more people must be involved in decision-making and has, therefore, since 2007 and according to Lubisi (2007) in KwaZulu-Natal Circular number 10 of 2007, decided to increase the number of teachers in formal leadership positions by appointing Senior Teachers who then form part of the School Management Team (SMT). These Senior Teachers are at the same level as Heads of Department (HODs) and are expected to perform similar duties to those of HODs. Thus,

when it comes to talking about processes of decision making, it should be expected that diverse experiences will emerge.

To sum up, post 1994 South Africa issued a range of policies like SACE (2000), and NEPA (1996) that encourage all the stakeholders, i.e. parents, teachers and learners, to be involved in decision making in their schools. Wherever this happens it will signal a significant ideological and practical shift from the way in which schools were led and managed during apartheid, although in many instances it is likely that traditional, autocratic decision making remains in place.

1.2 Rationale for the study

Research conducted by Christie (2001) showed that schools that are performing well are schools that involve all stakeholders in decision-making. It struck me, therefore, that if other research showed that allowing more than the principal and deputy principal to make decisions produces good results, then the relevance of this fact to how the principals and deputy principals in the rural schools in my area involve teachers was worth investigating as the results in schools in my area are not good. I am sure that all the principals want their schools to perform better as all people generally want to be associated with good achievements. The problem may be the route chosen to achieve good results i.e. they may not know what to do to achieve the results they desire. Research conducted by Grant (2006) in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa shows that it is almost always only people in formal leadership positions who are involved in decision-making in most South African schools.

In my former school there were rigid structures and teachers were told the boundaries that they must not cross. One discovered teachers having good ideas when they were chatting in the staff room but their ideas ended there because they were moulded to move like a mouse in a cage. Sometimes you heard teachers saying that people in management positions were supposed to do this and that. When I asked them why they were not raising their ideas their response was ‘who am I to tell the principal or deputy principal what to do’? In such a situation there is little professional growth amongst the teachers because the responsibilities are not shared and therefore distributive leadership is not encouraged. But it is no longer necessary for one person to be the “boss” as s/he cannot be effective alone in these ever changing policy times.

Another driving force behind my choice to conduct this research stems from what I have observed as a Post Level 1 educator in my former school. Here, the ideas from the Post Level

1 educators were not taken seriously by the principal even if they were good ideas. In my previous school the principal used to raise an issue to be discussed. If a Post Level 1 educator raised a suggestion and the principal was not in favour of it, she used to convince the whole staff to go with her idea without working with the ‘majority rule’. I was, therefore, very interested in finding out if what I have observed in my school is also happening in other schools - or not. However, for the reasons just stated, and given the constraints in scope of a dissertation in the context of a course work Masters degree, I have limited my focus to principals, deputy principals and teachers in terms of the decision making dynamic explored in the research sites, in this study. I have included Post Level 1 educators because I saw them as important source to corroborate what the principals and deputy principals told me. Investigating the role played by *all* stakeholders (parents, learners, non-educators etc.) in these sites does not, therefore, form a part of this study. The possible impact of this decision is raised in chapter four when limitations of the study are identified.

1.3 Key research questions

The key research questions which this study aimed to achieve were:

- (i) What is the role of the principal and deputy principal in decision-making processes in a school?
- (ii) To what extent do these processes facilitate the inclusion of Post Level 1 educators?

1.4 Methodological approach

This study was a qualitative study and was situated in the interpretive paradigm, which drew on the following methods for data collection:

- (i) Semi-structured interviews
- (ii) Observation
- (iii) Document analysis.

1.5 Overview of remainder of dissertation

In the next chapter, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks governing this study will be described. In Chapter 3 the focus is specifically on international and South African-based literatures on decision making in schools and other government departments like the Department of Health and Social Development. Chapter 4 describes the research design applied to this study i.e. it identifies the research sites, the form of sampling used, and how participants were selected. In addition, the methods used to collect data will be described, and

the limitations of the study raised. This will be followed by Chapter 5 which will deal with the analysis of data and how it links to the literature. Finally, Chapter 6 will consider the summary of the findings, recommendations for practical changes, and suggestion for future research.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMING

2.1 Introduction

The position taken in this study is that no one person should take the decisions for an organisation i.e. the leadership in this regard should not be located in one person. Instead, everybody must be involved in discussions that lead to decisions that impact on all members of that organisation being made. Generally speaking, there is nobody who knows everything or who has the answers to all the problems that occur on a daily basis in any organisation. Therefore, the contribution of other members of the organisation is necessary for the organisation to move forward. In a school situation, therefore, the involvement of teachers in making decisions that affect them directly is critical if there is to be complete co-operation and ‘buy in’ to these decisions. For these reasons, the theoretical framework that most appropriately underpins this research is that of distributive leadership theory. Before engaging with distributive leadership theory in detail and as it applies to schools, however, a brief historical review of school leadership theory and styles will be offered so as to situate distributive leadership theory more precisely in this field.

2.2 The ‘Great Man Theory’

Coleman (2005, p. 9) identifies the type of leadership that invests the powers of leadership to one person as the ‘Great Man Theory’ which focuses on the qualities of individuals i.e. in the context of schooling, this is specifically the principals. This theory believes that “leaders are not made, but born”. Therefore, this theory does not accommodate the concept of a leader being the leader of leaders. Evidence of the Great Man Theory in action is noticeable in many schools which I have either worked in or visited whereby only the principal is praised when the school does well. Conversely, if the school is not doing well people talk about removing the principal. The principal is therefore seen as the person on top who is the engine of the institution. This is associated with the traditional way of leadership and the notion of ‘positional’ leadership.

Implicit in the naming of the Great Man Theory is of course the very gendered nature of traditional leadership in schools. Thus Coleman (2005, p. 9) notes that “this theory is linked with stereotypes of leaders in the heroic mould, who are usually of the male gender”. This is similar to one of the findings of Grant (2005, p. 51) in school leadership research which was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa when one of the participants stated that “if you are a woman even before the interviews you stand no chance to be recommended as a principal and it is worse when you are small in stature”. Coleman (2003) endorses this last

point when he notes that the profession of teaching is numerically dominated by women but there are very few women in positions of management in education. Also, Thurlow (1993) cited in Coleman (2003) reports the findings of a study that was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal that indicated that 95.4 percent of the principals at high school level were male. According to my observation in the schools surrounding my place of birth in the Eastern Cape, it is common to find, for example, that in a staff of 16 teachers there is only one male and that male is the principal.

Grant (2003) argues that proponents of the Great Man Theory do not believe that there is something called effective leadership training. Other critics of this approach point out that it assumes that not everyone can be a leader, only the few with certain qualities can lead. Thus a more egalitarian view would promote the view that all people have the ability to lead and through reading and being trained each one can be developed to lead. Therefore, it is up to each and every educator to develop his/her own leadership potential so that s/he can lead his/her learners and colleagues in the best possible way (*ibid*).

2.3 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership fits with the positional approach to leadership and decision making. Although the emphasis of the instructional leader is on learning, the curriculum, and effective teaching, the principal is still the one to 'lead' and control the process. So here, decision making continues to be the job of the principal. Coleman (2005) states when a principal enacts an instructional leadership style s/he, for example motivates teachers to further their studies in the field of their specialisations, i.e. a teacher teaching technology should further his or her studies majoring in technology. "This leadership style is also called 'learning-centred leadership' as it focuses on good teaching, effective learning and achievement; it focuses on the core activity of the school, the learning and teaching of the learners, and this is controlled by the principal" (*ibid*, p. 13). But by the late 70s and 80s, the obvious need for the role of the principal to begin to change was recognised most clearly in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Thus, the notions of the 'transformational' leader and 'moral leadership' began to emerge.

2.4 Transformational leadership

Leithwood (1999) cited in Coleman (2005, p. 14) argues that transformational leadership relates strongly to building the capacity of members of the organisation although the principal in most contexts continues to dictate direction. The ideal of this type of leadership would be that people other than the formal leader be given an opportunity to lead, thus the outcomes

would be “greater capacity and continuing improvement in the performance of the job”. Leithwood (1999) cited in Coleman (2005, *ibid*) goes on to say that transformational leaders are role models who work to ensure that their followers are impressed by their actions and copy them. Generally speaking, a leader who uses this style of leadership is unselfish and encourages coloration on the future visioning of an institution. Broad, open and reciprocal participation characterises the transformational leader’s style of leadership, thus ‘followers’ are carefully listened to and their ideas noted, as are those of the leader. Coleman (2003) also mentions that the principal who practises transformational leadership does not depend on his or her natural ability to attract and influence other people but continually attempts to empower staff and share leadership functions. Sergiovanni (1990) cited in Coleman (2003) argues that transformational leadership ensures the commitment of followers, and that leaders and followers are united in achieving their high-level common goals, and both want to become the best and want to shape the school in a new direction.

Leithwood (1992) cited in Coleman (2003) states that studies in educational institutions have indicated that transformational leaders appear to be very important in helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture, fostering teacher development and helping teachers solve problems together more effectively. Educational management has changed in many different countries as schools are supposed to manage themselves, and South Africa is no exception (See Chapter 1). For this to be successful it requires all the stakeholders in the individual school to work together and participate in decision making to achieve their goals.

It should be clear by now that transformational leadership in its best form is inherently moral leadership too, since ‘moral leadership’ stresses the importance of values. Moral leadership is important in the area of education, particularly in the South African context, since it stresses the importance of values in leadership and aims for morally justified actions and democratic schools (Leithwood (1999) cited in Coleman (2005)). Professionals in education are charged with the care and development of young people, and putting right the injustices of the past. Thus the need for moral leadership is evident. It is concerned with ethics and morality and with deciding what is significant, what is right and what is worthwhile (*ibid*). Harber and Davies (1997) cited in Coleman (2005) highlight that it is important for the principal to develop democratic education; learners must understand that democracy means more than voting. This will make democracy to be embedded in their minds and hearts and hopefully lead to them applying democratic practices in their work places when they have grown up.

Coleman (2005) also maintains that democratic values will translate into the classroom through a change in the power relationships of teachers and learners. In a more democratic learning environment, learners take charge of their own learning with teachers acting as facilitators (*ibid*). Democratic schools will encourage the participation of pupils and teachers in the running of the school. In South Africa, in an attempt to move towards a more democratic society, the South African Schools Act of 1996 determines that governing bodies of schools include representatives of the community including parents, teachers and learners from age 14 upwards. This promotes distributed leadership as other stakeholders are involved in decision making. In the South African context ‘moral leadership’ is a critical issue given our history of unjust and discriminatory schooling practices, hence its relevance at this point should be noted. Given the focus of the overall study on which this dissertation is based, however, on specific engagement with the issue of ‘values in education’ is not developed further in it.

As can be seen from the discussion held so far in this chapter though, it is possible to trace the emergence of full on participative, democratised school leadership and management approaches, one of which i.e. ‘distributive leadership’ can be seen as having had a particularly strong impact on education policy making in the South African context. Its relevance to this study is also therefore highlighted and expanded on further below.

2.5 Defining ‘distributive leadership’

Defining ‘distributive leadership’ cannot be done simplistically as there is no single definition that dominates the literature. Harris (2003) cited in Grant (2005, p. 65), writing in a schooling context, for example, explains that, “distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking it through formal position or role”. This is relevant to my study as it supports the position described above i.e. that, in a school, any person because of his capability, irrespective of his/her position or post level, must be involved in discussions and decision-making. In the South African context, especially in deep rural and/or understaffed schools, or in schools with few HODs, certain members of the staff are co-opted to be members of the School Management Team (SMT). This increases the number of people who are in the forefront of school management and thus increases the possibility of more democratised decision making processes. Boles and Troem (1994) cited in Muijs and Harris (2003, p. 437) state that, “In contrast to traditional notions of leadership premised upon an individual managing hierarchical systems and structures, distributed leadership is characterised as a form of collective leadership in which teachers

develop expertise by working together. This distributed view of leadership, it has been suggested, offers a framework for studying leadership practise in which every person at any level in one way or other acts as a leader". Thus, even Post Level one educators can be leaders in their classrooms and thus 'lead' in terms of dealing with issues such as absenteeism by learners, late coming, cleanliness of the classroom and controlling written and oral work of the learners. Teachers also lead in sub-committees within schools like sports, fund raising, entertainment, School Governing Body (SGB) and welfare committees. By so doing the notion of distributive leadership is endorsed.

What the above shows is that the days when the power of leadership is understood to be vested in one person i.e. the principal, are numbered. If a person thinks that s/he can work in isolation in a school and make decisions by her/himself s/he is at a risk of making the school to be less effective. Teachers must also be involved in decision-making so that they can understand the policies of the school. As Elmore (2000), cited in Muijs and Harris (2003, p. 438) points out, "in knowledge intensive enterprises like teaching and learning there is no way to perform these complex tasks without widely distributing the responsibility for leadership among roles in the organisation". Elmore's view is relevant to this study in so far as there are many decisions that are taken on a daily basis in all schools in the South African context too. Sometimes, for example, principals attend meetings, during school hours, that are organised by local departmental officials. These meetings are usually held in a town which is regarded as the central venue for all schools in that particular district, therefore, teachers left in the school should make the necessary decisions and carry the school forward.

Bennet *et al.* (2003) cited in Grant (2006, p. 513) note that "distributed leadership is not something done by an individual to others; it is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise". Additionally, Harris and Lambert (2003), cited in Muijs and Harris (2003), argue that distributed leadership extends the boundaries of leadership as it encourages involvement of other teachers in decision making. It seeks skills and expertise from other teachers to run their school. Also, Hopkins and Jackson (2003) cited in Muijs and Harris (2003), suggest that principals, deputy principals and Heads of Department (HODs) should create the space and opportunity for distributed leadership to occur and ensure that collaborative learning happens. This is possible when teachers are encouraged to form committees, have a programme for their committees, and have a chairperson or a leader. In this type of situation teachers will show their leadership skills in those committees. By so doing distributed leadership will occur

spontaneously, and when it is spontaneous it is more likely to be permanent as there is no tension between members of staff. Teachers will be in a relaxed atmosphere and will not be afraid to make mistakes and will learn from others. This is a challenge to principals to distribute leadership in their schools to teachers so that they (the principal and teachers) can improve and be recognised as good leaders. Harris (2002) cited in Coleman (2005) also identifies distributed leadership with the collective leadership of teachers working together to improve classroom practice and therefore pupil outcomes. “This ideal of distributed leadership is often normatively preferred, that is, it may be stated that it is better for leadership to be shared rather than to be vested in one person” (Coleman, 2005, p. 10).

What is clear from the above is that collegiality can also be understood as a key characteristic of effective participative school leadership. Bush (1995) identifies collegiality as a key characteristic of effective, democratised schooling context. He argues that it assumes that members of the organisation have an “authority of expertise that contrasts with the positional authority associated with bureaucratic models” (p. 52). Teachers need to work together to ensure a meaningful approach to teaching and learning and also have a right to share in the wider decision-making process. Decisions should be arrived at by consensus rather than conflict (*ibid*). Also, Grant (2003) argues that democratic leadership involves the members of the group in the making of policies. When the members participate in the formulation of policies, collegiality is promoted since it emphasises group and leader participation in decision making. Decisions about organisational matters are arrived at after consultation and communication with various members. This indeed shows collegiality. Coleman (2003) argues that in a democratic leadership style the power to make decisions is handed over to the staff members. The sharing of decision making which is collegiality is generally recognised as being preferable to telling.

Coleman (2003) notes too that the concept of vision is very important to leadership and leaders should communicate the vision and encourage the full involvement of the staff to fulfil the organisation’s vision. The suggestion is that in trying to build vision in schools, leaders should avoid a top-down approach which forces staff and stakeholders to reserve their ideas and opinions. The leader should make sure that the vision does not make the staff resentful and unwilling to participate in the process of developing the organisation (Coleman, 2003). The discussion and sharing of an organisation’s vision is part of collegiality.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has clarified that all the members of an organisation should collectively make decisions and play a leadership role. But Great Man theorists believe that a leader is one who is occupying a formal leadership position like the principal. However, over the past decades, people in leadership positions have begun to try to involve other members in decision making. This brief historical overview of changes in approaches to school leadership and decision making in this chapter show that in the South African schooling context the way is wide open for SMTs and educators to engage in leadership and decision making practices they have not experienced before. Coupled with the enabling policy framework now in place (as described in Chapter 1), it is clear that in principle, all schools should now begin to look very different from how they did during the apartheid years. But as some of the literature discussed here shows, this may not be the case just yet in all schools.

Although ‘decision making’ has been referred to in this chapter in many places, I have chosen to separate my discussion on the literature specific to this concept as there is a lot that I would like to present. However, as the title of the next chapter shows, it must be seen as flowing out of this chapter and where it is democratically practiced, as integral to distributive leadership approaches.

CHAPTER 3: DECISION MAKING (AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES): A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

It is commonly understood that in any organisation there is a leader or a manager who is responsible and accountable for the decisions taken, and that decisions are taken for a range of reasons e.g. to solve a problem, plan a course of action etc. Furthermore, and at the risk of stating the obvious, since implementing a decision always involves people, people must be involved in decision-making so as to increase the possibility of support for, and implementation of, a particular decision. The literature suggests that one cannot divorce decision-making from leadership, neither in contexts where an autocratic leadership style prevails and where no other employees are involved in decision-making, nor in those where a democratic leadership style prevails and where all employees are involved in decision-making. The literature also shows that leadership need not be the task of the few, and changing from an autocratic to democratic leadership style needs the contribution of everybody in an organisation.

Since the aim of this study was to find out to what extent South African, rural school principals and deputy principals involve Post Level one educators in the decision making process in their schools, this chapter examines literature (both local and international) related to decision-making (in a more general sense), and then specifically that related to the benefits of involving all the stakeholders in decision-making in schools.

3.2 Decision making as an organisational mechanism

For any organisation to perform better, nothing happens automatically. Some decisions must be in place. But it also does not help to make good decisions that will not be implemented. One of the problems that may make decisions not to be implemented is the way in which they are made. It is common to hear people saying that they are not against the decision but their problem is with the approach used to make decisions. They often state this when they are not consulted when the decision was taken. Some pose questions like: Who made that particular decision? Where? When? Generally, this destroys trust and good relationship in an organisation.

For the smooth functioning of any organisation, therefore, “decisions are the organisational mechanisms through which an attempt is made to achieve a desired state” (Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1988, p. 153), and effective implementation is the key to achieving this state. Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly say that, “a decision must be effectively implemented to achieve the objective for which it is made. It is entirely possible for a good decision to be hurt by poor implementation” (*ibid*). Leaders thus have the responsibility to close some of the gaps that lead to non-implementation by inviting and allowing people who will implement the decision to discuss possible solutions and finally take the decision. “The test of the soundness of a decision is the behaviour of the people affected by the decision. While a decision may be technically sound (more relevant to solving the problem), it can easily be undermined by dissatisfied subordinates” (*ibid*, p. 154). That is why Fullan (1993) states that you cannot assume that decisions taken by policy makers or leaders will be implemented, instead people who are affected by the problem must play a part in discussing the problem so that they can come with possible solutions. He goes on to say that when it comes to educational reform, what are important are skills, creative thinking and committed action. He also says that almost all educational changes require new skills, behaviour, beliefs and understanding. Therefore, if teachers are involved in decision-making they will understand better how decisions are arrived at, and are more likely to believe in them and make sure that they are implemented.

Of course, and fairly obviously, it is not enough to simply make decisions, they *must* be good ones. Everand and Morris (1990) cited in van der Bank (2005, p. 12) say that, “Whether setting goals, planning how to achieve them, or coping with the issue, problems or situations that arise in organising and carrying out day-to-day activities, making things happen as we wish them to, as well as preventing unwanted events, depends on our ability to solve problems by taking and implementing effective decisions”. This shows that in any organisation, people must be able to solve problems by taking and implementing good decisions. Van der Bank (2005) notes further that “problem solving and decision-making are continual management functions which play an important part in the management process and you cannot run away from them as they are vital to all the cyclical management functions. Purposeful planning depends on effective decision making; organising, e.g. work allocation depends on effective decision-making; leading is based on making a decision regarding the most appropriate leadership style, and the controlling function can only be effective if the criteria are agreed on by means of participative decision- making” (p.12). This

shows that decisions are made on a daily basis and they are made to solve a problem, and sometimes a good decision can be useless if it was a unilateral decision taken by one person without involving all the members of an organisation, especially when the members of the organisation do not want to implement that decision.

The international literature suggests that involving all stakeholders in leadership and decision-making improves the morale of the workers. Mbigi (1994, p. 40), for example, describes a Shona business practice in Botswana called *pungwe* which is “characterised by the full participation of every member present and anyone could take on the leadership role. These *pungwe* sessions improve the morale of the workers”. From *pungwe* sessions we can learn that in a school situation all the teachers should be involved in decision-making so that they can be motivated and have eagerness to do their job as they will realise that their ideas are considered and their contribution is valued by the school.

Another example is mentioned by Yepes (2005), as he reports that in Colombia in the Department of Health, there is a law that was established to ensure participation of everybody in hospitals in decision-making. This resulted in a friendly atmosphere in Colombian hospitals. The employees were lovely and willing to help the patients at all times. This participation in decision making has made the employees to feel welcomed and honoured as their ideas are included when formulating policies. This has also increased care and warmth received by the clients (*ibid*). The Department of Social Development (1995) in Madagascar also followed suit to recommend the participation of employees in decision-making. A programme has been started to ensure the stakeholder participation in decision making.

But collaborative forms of decision making can only emerge in an organisation where the notion of distributed leadership underpins the ‘management’ style and is promoted by those in formal leadership and management positions. In the following section, schools become the specific focus of the discussion, beginning with a review of selected international contexts.

3.3 The international context

As indicated above, decision-making is a key function of leadership in any context, as it must be done when leaders are planning and organising in their daily job. In schools it plays a critical role in the overall effectiveness of the school as an organisation. Gone are those days whereby, when the principal is absent from a school, the school does not function well because the teachers do not have information they need and/or they do not know what to do and when. When they are part of the decisions taken by the school they have the confidence

and necessary knowledge to work to the best of their ability even in the absence of the principal.

In schools in New Brunswick in Canada, participation in decision making is encouraged by a government policy that calls for parents and learners to work with teachers as partners in education (Williams, 2006). This sets the scene for principals to make use of distributed leadership approaches in their schools. But some authors like Lambert (2000), Ogawa and Bossert (2000) and Harris (2003) cited in Williams (2006), argue that distributed and collaborative leadership does not exist in Canadian schools. In Ogawa and Bossert's (2000) view (cited in Williams, 2006) current Canadian school leadership is promoting hierarchical structures and preventing collaboration among teachers in schools. Thus there is a challenge to many principals in Canada to change from hierarchical structures to more flexible structures that will encourage participation of teachers in decision making. In support of this claim, there is the research conducted by Emihovich and Battaglia (2000), also cited in Williams (2006), in Canada, about the prevalence of collaborative leadership in schools. Their study found that most principals still believe that their role is to be the bosses of schools rather than to be collaborative professionals. Jackson (2000) cited in Williams (2006) states that the reason why principals hesitate to share leadership is because the school effectiveness literature continues to spread the view that leadership should be centred on the principal who is the head of the school, rather than leadership that is widely spread among teachers in a school. As established at the beginning of this dissertation, my study aims to problematize this view.

To continue, Ogawa and Bossert (2000) and Harris (2003) cited in Williams (2006) say that it is not because principals do not want to involve teachers in decision making but it is the hierarchical structure created by the National Department of Education with its clearly defined roles and communication channels that prevent principals from sharing leadership with teachers. Coppier (2005) talks about the concept of a school as a learning organisation in which he says everybody in the school must share their ideas and participate together in planning what they want to achieve. This can be possible if the principal is encouraging the principle of distributed leadership in his/her school. Although the literature explains the strengths of consultative and group decision-making, in Canadian schools generally it seldom exists. Finally, Williams (2006) states that principals in Canada have the task of developing professional learning communities whereby they change from taking decisions in isolation to a more consultative and participative way of making decisions. Fullan and Miles (1993, p.

73) support the idea of consulting and involving all stakeholders in decision-making in schools as they state that: “Changing from autocratic to democratic leadership style cannot be established by formal leaders (like principals and their deputies working by themselves); each and every teacher has the responsibility to help create an organisation capable of individual and collective enquiry and continuous renewal”. The theory of distributive leadership as discussed in the previous chapter clearly underpins this view.

In addition, Smylie (1995, p. 4) states that, “encouraging teachers to participate in decision-making enhances their quality and can attract and retain the most talented teachers in the profession”. South Africa, for example, is having a shortage of teachers; therefore principals have a challenge to retain teachers in the profession by recognising them as leaders who should participate in decision-making, therefore, I endorse this view of Smylie’s (1995). In other words, by making the effort to include teachers in decision-making processes, principals would be aiming “to enhance the institutional capacity and performance of schools ... thereby increasing the expertise available for improvement” (*ibid*). Smylie (1995, p. 5) also says that researchers in the United Kingdom, the United States of America (USA) and Canada have recommended that collaborative decision-making should be practised in schools. He goes on to say that, “the number of leadership programmes and initiatives including participation in decision-making has grown substantially in USA and Canada”. These leadership programmes focus on participative leadership where “all teachers feel part of the change or development and have a sense of ownership” (*ibid*). To concur with him, Fullan (1993) argues that if people are involved in decision-making they will have eagerness to implement the decision and will not be reluctant to change. Thus it can be seen that the governments of the USA and Canada have not only issued a policy about participatory decision-making but taken it a step further by setting up workshops to equip the principals with participatory decision-making skills. Nevertheless, as some of the literature above shows, even in a developed country such as Canada, there is still much work to be done with principals if ‘practice’ is to meet ‘policy’.

Day and Harris (2000) cited in Muijs and Harris (2003, p. 437) say that: “One of the most congruent findings from studies of effective leadership is that decision-making need not be located in the person of the leader but can be dispersed within the school in between and among people. Decision-making is separated from person, role and status and is primarily concerned with the relationships and the connections among individuals within a school”. What is quite apparent, however, is that this form of decision making can only emerge in a

schooling context where the notion of distributed leadership has been internalised by the principal and her/his SMT.

But, as MacNeil and Yelvington (2005, p. 3) quite rightly observe, generally throughout the world “schools have traditionally been managed by bureaucratic management style principals. In this style principals rely on a rational set of structuring guidelines, such as rules and procedures, hierarchy and a clear division of labour. Additionally, principals using this style receive lots of credit for an efficiently run school, but over time this style of management eventually backfires as creative teachers and learners become unsettled”. Therefore when teachers are not involved in discussions that lead to decision-making and are not given the opportunity to show their creativity they become bored and potentially disruptive. But the reason so many principals leave teachers out of key decision-making processes is “because they are particularly threatened by the idea of empowering other leaders for fear of diminishing their own power base. Also, principals globally are no longer strictly managers, they are expected to be leaders, leaders that can take their school to a higher level of academic achievement, where all the learners are successful learners and all teachers engage their learners” (*ibid*, p. 4). To become such a leader, principals need to leave behind their bureaucratic management style and be flexible enough to involve all stakeholders in decision making. In short, they need to ‘buy in’ to the concept of distributed leadership.

In Sweden too, there is a belief that no one person must have all the powers in running the school; instead everybody must play a role. This recognises the ability of the teachers that they can play a role in the development of the school. By so doing they are supporting the notion of distributed leadership. That is why Hansson and Andersen (2007), who studied Swedish schools, argue that leadership must be spread amongst the teachers throughout the school, and for the school to be run smoothly depends upon the leadership style used as they state that, school leadership is considered to be a key element in effective schools and has attracted researchers around the world. Thus, “leadership matters [and] ... school leadership can influence the effectiveness of the school, and has a central role for developing schools” (Huber, 2004b cited in Hansson and Andersen, 2007, np).

Hansson and Andersen (2007) go on to say that there is also a common understanding that school leadership can be learned. For example, in any company when they advertise a job they state that certain experience is required, as they hope that through your experience there

is something you have learned. Similarly, in school based leadership positions like principal, deputy principal and head of department, a working experience is needed before a person is appointed for that post. Some provinces in South Africa, like the Eastern Cape for example, state clearly in the bulletin when they advertise posts, that applicants who will be considered for principal posts are those teachers who have done a course on leadership and management in a tertiary institution. Although there is yet no circular that has been distributed to schools, the ex-Minister of Education in South Africa, Naledi Pandor, was captured on radio in 2006 saying that, “in the coming years no person will be appointed to be a principal if s/he does not have a Masters in Education Leadership and Management”. This clearly supports the idea that leadership can be learned, as the ex-Minister thinks that a teacher who has done a Masters in Leadership and Management has gained knowledge and skills needed to lead the teachers in schools, including being exposed to various theories that help in the smooth running of the school, such as encouraging the participation of teachers in decision making. Senge (1990) states that for schools to generally improve, teachers, parents, community and business partners, administrators and learners must be involved in discussions and making of decisions. I clearly endorse Senge’s view that when all the stakeholders are involved in decision making schools will change for the better but globally this has not yet happened as indicated above.

The challenges facing Swedish and Canadian schools as described above were also confronted by Australia 40 years ago. In response, the Australian Federal Government was forced to transform the education system to consider and accommodate the views of the people close to the learner i.e. parents and teachers. This is evidenced in Chapman’s (1993) work where he reports that, “in Australia during the 1970s and 1980s school systems faced with the need to respond to a broad range of social, political, economic and management pressures, attempted to decentralise administrative arrangements and devolve responsibility to the local level” (p. 3). To achieve this, there was a need for all the stakeholders to work together. The government attempted to bring a change in the education system by calling on all departmental officials, policy makers, principals, teacher unions and representatives of parents’ associations to meet together and urged them to try to destroy the traditional hierarchy that characterised education and move to a participatory decision making. It was generally agreed that schools and regional officials of the department of education should increasingly involve teachers, parents, learners in school management and decision making (*ibid*). By so doing they endorsed the concept of distributed leadership.

3.4 Decision making in South African schools

In South Africa most politicians, the average educator and the public are more interested in the Matriculation Examination (hereafter written as Matric) results i.e. final school exit results (Grade 12), than taking seriously the performance of the learners in *all* grades from grade one to twelve. And they tend to label the schools that get poor results as poor and less capable schools. The National Department of Education labels those schools as ‘underperforming’ schools and closely monitors them. On the other hand, schools that get good results in Grade 12 are labelled as ‘good’ schools. Parents like to send their children to those schools, and do not mind even if there are no curricular activities or even if those schools use corporal punishment. Though this may sound like a sweeping statement, I have noticed exactly this trend in my neighbouring schools.

In an attempt to find out what characterised the schools which continued to perform well while those around them were getting poor results, Christie (2001, p. 41) reports on a national research project conducted in thirty-two schools selected from seven provinces of South Africa. “Although almost all the different types of schools were included in this study i.e. Catholic and state schools; primary and secondary schools; rural and urban schools; and two schools for learners with special educational needs, no attempt was made to constitute a representative sample of schools. Instead individuals and organisations working with schools were asked to recommend schools that they thought were operating well under difficult circumstances, and which they thought could make a contribution to the project of building up local knowledge of school development and school quality”.

In general, and according to my observation as an educator, there are many reasons that the educators tend to state regarding poor performance in their schools. Some of those reasons include lack of resources like laboratories, libraries, apparatus, inadequate support from the Departmental officials, no interest from the parents to support their children because of their low level of literacy and overcrowded classrooms. It has also been common for high schools to point fingers at their counterparts in junior secondary schools saying that they are not honest in their work as there is no external examination in the exit grade at this level i.e. Grade 9. My own school made use of the above excuses in 2009 when we were asked by the Departmental officials to account for our poor results in Grade 12 in 2008. Despite these problems and excuses which might be valid, the question still remains as to why some schools do well in the same areas as those that are struggling.

In Christie's (2001) view, there is no formula that can be used to help schools achieve good Matric results, and there is no one person who can determine the results. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to enjoy being at school so that they will be keen to teach the learners, have eagerness to excel in presenting their lessons and make good decisions that will help the learners to improve their performance. One of the ways to make teachers happy at school is to show them that you trust them to have good ideas to develop the school and therefore, involve them in decision making. However, Christie does make some suggestions in terms of improving results. She argues that improvements in schools rely on how the principals lead and manage their schools. The principals of schools in Christie's study consulted the staff and motivated them to participate in decision making. Many schools had school management teams that worked together with the principals (Christie, 2001). This shows that participation in decision making can produce good results as all the schools in Christie's study were doing well.

However, as in most rural areas in South Africa, for a range of complex reasons mostly related to the legacy of apartheid, parents are less interested in school activities and do not think that they have to play a role in the education of their children. Some parents even accuse teachers of failing to do their job when requested by the teachers to come to school to solve a particular problem, especially when their children have misbehaved. Christie (2001) states that certain principals in her study noted that parents often saw the school as having responsibility for their children and for running itself, and attempts to involve parents were viewed as the school failing to fulfil its responsibility. In reality parents should not only visit the schools on the day when they assist their children to apply for admission, they must assist the school in all the activities that take place. A school is not like a dust bin where one will dump useless articles and never look back. Parents must work together with the teachers to support the teaching and learning of their children. This is in line with the South African Schools Act 84 of (1996, p. 36) as it lays down that "all schools must establish governing bodies on which parents have the largest numerical representation. In secondary schools, learners are to be represented".

There is a common belief amongst the general populace in South Africa that most schools that do well in final Matric results are the former White schools because they have all the resources needed to teach the learners. Some people also complain about the use of English as the language-of-examinations, hence most English second (or third) language speaking learners, especially in rural areas, struggle to understand and answer in English. To try to

respond to this argument, Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007) conducted research about the schools that work, based on Matric results and included 18 schools from different categories in their sample i.e. schools in Quintile 1 and 2 (these are poor schools), schools in the middle quintiles (i.e. Quintiles 3 and 4) and well-to-do schools (i.e. Quintile 5). The medium of instruction in all the schools in the study was English, except of course, in the case of the teaching and learning of the relevant vernacular. Surprisingly some schools in deep rural areas manage to get good results despite the medium of instruction not being their home language and without having adequate or additional resources such as, laboratories, computers, sport fields and opportunities for extra-curricular activities (*ibid*).

What emerged from this study is that it is important to make use of the available resources to a maximum level to achieve the benefits you require. It was noted that the principals in these schools do not undermine the human resource that they have i.e. the teachers, and make use of them in discussions that lead to decision making. Also, in these schools the principal is not the only leader; teachers are playing a leadership role and they assist each other. Thus Christie *et al.* say in a number of schools there was evidence of SMT working together with the teachers, “although it could take different forms in different schools. In one instance, the principal worked from the centre of her School Management Team (SMT), and there was co-operation among staff and the leadership team” (*ibid*). One of the important qualities of a leader that emerged from the study is that s/he must not be selfish, s/he must develop other people, and by so doing s/he is developing himself or herself. It is important too, that all the stakeholders should work together and share a common vision. One principal reported in Christie’s study how when new staff joined the school, the vision and mission of the school was shared with them, and the emphasis was put on working as a team.

The research conducted by Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007) above proves that good work is not the result of an individual’s effort but the result of people working together. In my own school there are committees and in each committee there is a chairperson and also a secretary. The committees draft their programs and present them to the whole staff and also submit them to the principal. Therefore, the principal becomes the leader of leaders. This is helpful as it empowers teachers. In contrast, in some schools in my area that were doing well up to the point at which a particular principal left the school, the performance of the schools dropped which suggests that the teachers were not empowered but relied on one person who was a leader and that person was the principal.

Teachers spend most of their time at school and therefore it is necessary to ensure that they are satisfied in the workplace. If they are satisfied with their work they will have eagerness to assist each other and involve themselves in constructive discussions that will develop their school. This will also make learners to receive quality education and will do well in their school work. All of this can be achieved by allowing teachers to participate in decision making. Anderson (2002), speaking from a workplace context, maintains that one of the reasons for employees to participate in decision making is to produce more and better goods in a factory or, in a schooling context, produce higher learner achievement from more satisfied teachers in schools. Additionally, a principal must allow teachers to play a leadership role in the school so that his/her task will be easier and at the same time s/he would be developing his/her staff. In a trusting, collaborative and respectful context such as this, there is generally no competition between the teachers in the same school. If any teacher has done something good he/she has done it for the school, credit will go to the school; therefore, there is no reason to expect only one person to play a leadership role. This calls for principals to train teachers to be able to play a leading role in the school.

There has been a great improvement in South African schools since 1994 about how decisions are made, and it is true to say that some schools do indeed involve teachers in decision making, although there are many more schools with principals that still make unilateral decisions. This improvement is confirmed by The Editor's (1998), survey of principals in South Africa in the province of KwaZulu-Natal about how decisions are made in schools (cited in Bush, 1998). This survey showed that 78% of the principals who participated in the study normally discuss with staff before a joint decision is taken, suggesting a participative approach. Principals claimed to be working towards consensus decision-making involving all educators and school aims were decided in consultation with all the stakeholders (*ibid*).

In general, one can safely say that it depends on the SMT as to whether other stakeholders are involved in decision-making. In a study conducted by Singh (2007), for example, in two urban primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, the aim was to find out "how the School Management Teams either promoted or posed a barrier to the development of teacher leadership and, by implication decision making by classroom based educators" (*ibid*, p. 6). Her findings suggest that it is in the power of the SMT to involve or not to involve all the stakeholders in decision making. The findings from another study conducted by Grant and Singh (2009, p. 10), also in the South African context, showed that the "opportunities for

teachers to take on leadership roles beyond their core function of classroom teaching had recently surfaced in the schools. A teacher in one of the schools said that opportunities to lead were greater than they were in the past, for example, he said that their principal involve them in policy making”.

Grant (2005, p. 44) contends that “distributed leadership is needed so that informal shared forms of leadership are allowed to emerge. As there are always changes in schools in South Africa in the 21st century, one person can no longer be expected to lead and manage a school effectively”. Other South African researchers also report that teachers are involved in making decisions in some activities and not in others, whereas most teachers prefer to be involved in making decisions in all aspects of school life. This is indicated by the research which was conducted by Mosage and van der Westhuizen (1997) cited in Bush (1998) in a sample of schools that were randomly selected in the Gauteng South region in South Africa with the aim of finding out South African teachers’ attitude to participation in decision making. The findings showed that teachers wish to be involved in all the decisions made in the school but were unfortunately deprived of participation in respect of items relating to budgeting, school policy making, teacher evaluation, staff development and orientation of new pupils (*ibid*). This shows that even the schools that give the teachers the opportunity to participate in decision making may involve them in certain activities and not in others. Therefore, there is still a lot to be done to influence the principals to involve the teachers in decision making to a maximum level.

3.5 Collaboration and decision making at the classroom level

In many schools throughout the world there is a need to develop programmes that will help teachers to work together in their classrooms, (see for example, Smylie, 1995; Anderson, 2002; Grant, 2008) as a way not only to improve and extend their practice ‘proficiency’, but also to develop their decision making abilities to promote distributive leadership. This can start by planning the lessons together, followed by assisting each other in presenting different activities of the lesson. Additionally one of the roles of the Heads of Department in South African schools is to do class visits with the aim of developing teachers. Therefore, teaching should not be a confidential activity whereby the teacher works alone with his/her learners in the class. Even if a person has a degree in teaching s/he may not know all the approaches for presenting lessons. This calls for teachers to work together in planning and also in presenting the lessons. By so doing they will learn from one another and improve their performance - and enact the concept of distributive leadership.

Griffin (1995, p. 30), in a study conducted in the United States of America, says that he had conversations with five teachers about the effects of shared decision-making in school and also in the classroom and states that, “Team teaching is recommended and is desirable for strengthening learner learning and for enhancing professional interaction about matters of instructional importance. Teachers working in isolation from one another seldom learn from one another, non-participation in an organisation’s decision-making structure makes the teacher not to feel as a member of the school and will not know whether what s/he is doing is good or not”. Additionally, he said that teachers in their schools know the environment in which they teach in and know the learners better than any other person (Griffin, 1995). This shows that it is important for the decisions to be made by the people closest to the learners who know the environment and the beliefs of the school community i.e. the teachers. In contrast, as we know, sometimes people have different opinions about some issues. One teacher who was recorded in Griffin’s (1995) study did not believe in team teaching or being observed in the classroom as he argued that “we trust each other as we are the professionals and nobody can tell another one how to teach. We do not want to destroy trust amongst ourselves by telling teachers how to teach as it was difficult to establish trust” (p. 30).

3.6 Conclusion

From the above review of relevant literature, it is apparent that in schools and in non-schooling contexts, there are initiatives taken by different state departments in different countries to promote distributed leadership. In summary, the literature shows that in any organisation decisions have to be taken to solve problems and it is important to involve all stakeholders when decisions are taken, especially those who are affected by, or who will implement the decision. When this happens the employees will be willing to implement those decisions. Throughout the world, including South Africa, government departments, including education departments, have taken steps to encourage participation in decision making, like issuing Acts or circulars that encourage this participation. In schools, it is becoming increasingly apparent that principals cannot work alone as the schools are dynamic organisations, and teachers are (or should be) leaders in their specialisations, and thus key professionals on whom principals rely. For this reason, all staff members must be empowered so that they can be motivated, skilled and accountable for their decisions. This will create transparency and trust and will ensure the culture of working even in the absence of the principal. However, participation in decision making cannot be achieved overnight as the traditional notion of leadership is still entrenched in many contexts, again including South

Africa. Locating oneself as a principal within a distributed leadership framework, however, clearly provides one with a sound and democratically defined position from which to introduce change and innovation in terms of shared decision making processes.

In the following chapter the research design applied to this study, which includes sampling, sites, participants and methods used, are discussed.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design and methods used in this study. To reiterate, my research was guided by the following research questions:

- a. What is the role of the principal and deputy principal in decision-making processes in a school?
- b. To what extent do these processes facilitate the inclusion of Post Level 1 educators?

This study is a qualitative study situated in the interpretive paradigm. It is possible to say this as there is a heavy emphasis on interpretation of descriptive data in the data analysis phase. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) say that the interpretive paradigm is characterised by a “concern for the individual” (p. 21), and its aim is to understand the “subjective world of human experience” (*ibid*), while Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) describe interpretive *methods* as methods that describe and interpret people’s feelings and experiences. They go on to say that we can understand other’s experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (*ibid*). Henning (2004) argues that interpretive researchers spend time where they conduct research, trying to understand what is happening there, and how people being researched make meaning of what they do. Then the researcher will describe and interpret what s/he has observed and what is said by the participants.

4.2 Sampling

4.2.1 Sites of Research

Three schools (A, B and C) in the Umzimkulu District in KwaZulu-Natal were selected for this study. All of them are in deep rural areas. I chose them because of their relative accessibility to the school at which I work (which is also in a remote rural area). I am aware that by focusing exclusively on rural schools I cannot make any comparative comments in relation to schools in other contexts. However, as under-resourced schools in remote areas constitute the majority of schools in this country, I believe this focus is warranted. The 3 schools in this study were also purposively selected as they all have a principal, a deputy principal and also Post Level 1 educators. All these three schools are classified as Quintile 3 schools by the Provincial Department of Education which means that they get their allocation of funds from the Department of Education and buy their own resources. Quintile 1 to Quintile 3 schools are those surrounded by poor communities, whereas Quintile 4 and Quintile 5 schools are surrounded by developed communities. Although the schools that

participated in my study are poor they have enough textbooks for learners, and a photocopying machine, as they have pre-paid electricity supplied to them. However, in most cases teachers rely on the 'chalk and talk' method. None of them has a science laboratory and/or a computer laboratory. Additionally, they rely on water collected in tanks from rain and have pit toilets.

School A has a total enrolment of 1327 learners and is a Combined School going from Grade one to Grade nine. They are allowed to extend their grades to Grades 10, 11 and 12, that is why the Department of Education is calling it a 'Combined' school. The School Management Team (SMT) includes the principal, two deputies (one is responsible for administration and one is responsible for academic matters), and five Heads of Department. The offices of the principal and her deputies are very close to each other, opposite to one another and sharing a main door. There are two offices for HODs in the same block where the principal's and deputy principals' offices are situated. There are also two staff rooms in the block opposite to that of the principal's, deputy principals' and HODs' offices.

In School B, there are 722 learners and it is a junior secondary school going from Grade R to Grade 9. The SMT includes the principal, deputy principal and four Heads of Department. The administration block has two main doors. When you enter in the first main door on the left hand side is the deputy principal's office, opposite to it is the clerk's office. When you enter in the clerk's office, on the left hand side is the principal's office. On the second main door is the staff room for all the other teachers and HODs.

School C is also a junior secondary school and has a roll of 855 learners. The SMT members are the principal, the deputy principal and four Heads of Department. All the educators including the SMT members share the same office. During break time teachers like to sit in their classrooms or in front of their classrooms rather than sitting in the staff room.

4.2.2 Selection of Participants

The total number of participants in this study was 9. This number was constituted by three principals, three deputy principals and three Post Level 1 educators from each of the three schools just described. In terms of identifying appropriate educators for the study, in School B and C, I requested the principal to identify one Post Level 1 educator who they thought would be willing to participate in my study. In School A I requested the principal to identify the deputy principal and one Post Level 1 educator. The reason for me to request the principal

to identify an educator to participate in my study is because there was no way that I could use random selection as I needed one educator per school. Had I done this, I believe the educator would question me as to how I chose him or her as I am a stranger who does not know them. At the same time, there was no way that any principal could force an educator to participate in my study, as the selected educator was aware that participation in this research is not in his/her job description and so no one could take disciplinary measures against him/her for refusing to participate. Furthermore, I explained to all the participants that participation was voluntary.

The Post Level 1 educators that participated in this study all have a minimum of three years teaching experience in their current schools. The reason for making a minimum of three years experience a key criterion for selection was because I believe that they have a solid idea of how the staff meetings are conducted and how the decisions are taken in their schools after this period of time. Thus, as can be seen, no attempt was made to constitute a representative sample of schools and therefore the findings will not be generalised to all the schools in rural areas or even the Umzimkulu district. Gender is also not an issue focused on in this study, and neither is race. However, as a result of a mix of contextual and historical factors, all participants are Africans.

In School A there are 34 educators. The principal is a 51 year old female and has been in this school for 5 years. The deputy principal who participated in my study is the one responsible for administration. She is a female who is 48 years old and has been in this school for the past 4 years. The Post Level 1 educator is a 39 year old male who has been in this school for the past 4 years. Only the principal, deputy principal and three Post Level 1 educators live close to the school, the rest stay in a town, about 33 kilometres from school.

In School B the total number of educators is 26. The principal is a 39 year old male and has been in this school for 6 years. The deputy principal is also a male who is 36 years old and has been in this school for the past 5 years. The Post Level 1 educator is a 33 year old female who has been teaching in this school for the past 4 years. Eight educators including the principal live close to the school. Three educators stay in their homes which are in the surrounding rural areas. The rest are tenants in a town which is 15 kilometres away from school.

In School C the total number of educators is 29. The principal is a male who is 55 years old and has been in this school for 26 years. The deputy principal is also a male who is 40 years

old and has been teaching in this school for the past 3 years. The Post Level 1 educator is a 31 year old male who has been teaching in this school for the past 8 years. Two teachers travel a distance of 51 kilometres to and from school, as does the deputy principal. The principal rents a room in a nearby homestead. Six teachers stay in a town that is 14 kilometres away from school. The rest stay in the 'area' where the school is situated.

4.3 Methods of data collection and data analysis

The following methods were used for data collection:

1. Semi-structured interviews.
2. Observation.
3. Document analysis.

Data analysis reflected a thematic content analysis approach and drew from the raw data specifically in relation to the two research questions which are stated in 4.1 above. However, how this was done and the themes that emerged will be discussed in full in the next chapter.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews with the principals, deputy principals and one Post Level 1 educators from each school were conducted. The interviews took place at the schools of the respondents after arrangements had been made. Each participant was interviewed for about 45 minutes. It was advantageous to use interviews to collect data as I could ask follow up questions when some interviewees gave me insufficient information. Bertram *et al.* (2003) argue that conducting interviews is better than, for example, a questionnaire, because, the researcher is present with the respondent and so can also make the questions clearer if necessary which obviously cannot be done with a questionnaire.

Terreblanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) suggest that conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people than making them fill out a questionnaire, do a test, or perform an experimental task and therefore it fits well with the interpretive approach to research. "The interpretive approaches see research as a means to an end (namely, to try to find out how people really feel about or experience particular things), and will therefore try to create an environment of openness and trust within which the interviewee is able to express herself or himself authentically" (*ibid*, pp. 297-298). One kind of interview is a semi-

structured interview, where the researcher develops an interview schedule (or list of the key topics and perhaps sub-topics in advance) (*ibid*). Denzin and Lincoln (2003), however, remind us that “the interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. It is not a neutral tool, for at least two people create the reality of the interview situation. In this situation answers are given. Thus the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific intentional episodes” (p. 48).

For all the above reasons, the use of a semi-structured interview process in my study was the most appropriate. I wanted to be able to engage with my participants face to face, and probe their responses when I felt that there was more that could be said. Thus, although I prepared ‘key’ areas to address prior to the interviews, I remained open to the direction they might take. Before I conducted my research-project, however, I piloted my questions for interviews by interviewing my principal and one Post Level one educator in my school to check if the questions were understandable and not vague. During this process, interviews were recorded with each participant’s permission. I also suggested that I play the recording of the interview back so that the interviewee could hear his/her responses and make any additional comments s/he wanted to. This proved very helpful in clarifying responses. See Appendix A and B for copies of the semi-structured interview schedules used.

Observation

Sometimes during interviews an interviewee inadvertently or deliberately says what s/he *thinks* is the case rather than what actually *is* the case, or what s/he actually *does*. That is why I requested the principal of each of the participating schools to allow me to observe one staff meeting. I considered this to be one way to try and corroborate what was said in interviews, thereby establishing one level of validity in terms of the interview data. Bertram *et al.* (2003) endorse this view by saying that, “when the researcher is using an observation method to collect data he obtains first-hand data rather than reported data. The researcher gains an insight into a situation and can see what is actually happening in the school” (p. 90), and Terreblanche *et al.* (2006) agree saying that, “observation takes place while things are actually happening, and thus gets you even closer to the action” (pp. 307-308). A copy of the observation schedule is found in Appendix D which was prepared in advance with the following headings: seating, start of the meeting, the body of the meeting and closing of the meeting.

Document Analysis

After I had observed the staff meeting in each of the participating schools I asked permission from the principal to make copies of the minutes of the previous staff meetings and explained to them that the ‘minute book’ of staff meetings was identified as another source of my data. This is because what one observes on one day does not mean that every day things are happening in the same manner. The principals understood my study and did not hesitate to hand their minute books to me to let me make copies. Terreblanche *et al.* (2006) say that “documentary sources such as official documents and books can be useful in all forms of qualitative research. Documentary material can be even more extensive than interview transcripts and field notes” (p. 308).

4.4 Issues of ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘validity’

The aim of using different methods of collecting data was to get rich data and to improve ‘validity’. Bertram *et al.* (2003) say that when they talk about research being ‘valid’, they are asking if it is sound or justifiable, if it is believable and if it is trustworthy. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) say that it is impossible for research to be 100 % valid, but the researcher must try by all means to improve validity of his/her study. For my study I tried to improve validity by using a tape recorder to record interviews, and transcribing the interviews *verbatim* to ensure that I would be working with ‘accurate’ data. Secondly, in addition to the interviews, and as indicated above, I observed one staff meeting per school to find out the procedure that is followed before making decisions. Also, I requested the minutes of the previous staff meetings. This is in line with what Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) call triangulation which they say is defined as the use of more than one method to collect data and by so doing trying to improve validity.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

4.5.1 Access to participants

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest that researchers should get permission from participants to proceed with the research and must ensure that the research will not do any harm to them. The University of KwaZulu-Natal also has a stringent ethical clearance process in place before any empirical research can be conducted, and clearance was given for this study (See Appendix E) before it began. One requirement of this process is that the researcher must get the participants to sign a ‘Letter of Consent’ that indicates that they have voluntarily taken part, and with a full knowledge of what the study involves. Thus, I handed Letters of

Consent (See Appendix C) to the principals of the three schools requesting permission to conduct my research in their schools. In each letter a copy of the declaration form was attached in which the participants wrote their names and signed as proof that they had read the informed consent document and understood and agreed to the terms of participation in the project set out. It was also stated that participation was voluntary, the research would not cause any form of harm or discomfort to them and that they were free to withdraw at any time. I also handed the letters of consent to the deputy principals and Post Level 1 educators.

4.6 Reflections on the data collection process

As a researcher and a deputy principal interviewing principals and deputy principals I was a little bit nervous because I was not sure whether the principals or deputy principals may think that my questions are personal in terms of trying to find out how much they know about leadership and management and their role in decision-making. But I also knew that the interpretive researcher just tries to find out how things are done in a particular environment – without prejudice, and so trusted that my intentions would not be questioned by my participants.

4.7 Limitations of the Research Design

One of the key limitations of this study is the number of schools and participants that could be researched. The small number of both means, therefore, that the findings cannot be generalised to all the schools in South Africa. They were not even the representative of Umzimkulu district as they are in the same ward and therefore we cannot say the findings show what is happening in all Umzimkulu schools. Secondly, the amount of time available to gather the required data was limited by the schools' programmes and my own work commitments. Had it been possible to do a more detailed ethnographic study of each school, no doubt the data would have been 'thicker' and potentially more reliable. Despite these limitations, however, I believe the data that were gathered reflected a significant level of 'worthwhileness' and that much can be learnt from the study as a whole. The findings from the schools in my study might also be found in other schools, as the principals and deputy principals have similar qualifications, attend similar workshops, were born and grew up in similar environments. This is what Stake (1978, p. 6) calls a 'naturalistic generalization' which is arrived at by "recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural co-variations of happenings".

4.8 Conclusion

To sum up, for this study 3 schools were purposively selected. There were 3 participants from each school. Semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis were used to collect data. This improved validity. Letters of consent were issued to all participants. Generalisation is not possible because of the few participants. In the following chapter data is presented and findings are discussed.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

As indicated in the previous chapter, for this study, data were collected using one on one interviews that were audio-taped, transcribed and supplemented by observation and document analysis. Data analysis conformed to a thematic content approach. Rajuili (2007) argues that the qualitative method requires that the analysis of data be done by following certain procedures, one of which may be to form themes from the responses of the participants. Also, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest that one of the ways of organising qualitative data analysis is by groups. The advantage of this method is that it automatically groups the data and enables themes, patterns to be seen at a glance. Building on these ideas, I categorised the information from all three sources of data, into themes, grouping together the responses that conveyed similar meanings or intentions in terms of how they contributed to answering my two key research questions. To reiterate, these questions were:

1. What is the role of the principal and deputy principal in decision-making processes in a school?
2. To what extent do these processes facilitate the inclusion of Post Level 1 educators?

This chapter is thus organised around the themes that emerged from the raw data specifically in relation to the two research questions. For ease of reading, the following is an example of how ‘codes’ were applied to each participant in the schools that made up the sites of research and thus how they are referred to when referencing data extracts in this chapter: For School A, the Principal is coded as ‘PA’, the Deputy Principal as ‘DPA’ and the Post Level 1 educator, ‘EA’. The same type of coding is used for Schools B and C. In presenting these themes, the data show that Schools B and C share many similarities and that in these two schools evidence of ‘emergent’ leadership (Muijs and Harris, 2007) can be found. School A, however, was different, with little evidence of change from ‘autocratic’ to democratic leadership (Fullan and Miles, 1993). Because of these distinctions, Schools B and C are often discussed together, and School A separately.

5.2 Themes

5.2.1 Decision making as a collective effort

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, in South Africa during the apartheid regime i.e. before 1994, the vast majority of schools were autocratically managed. Therefore, it is not an easy job for all principals and deputy principals to change to collaborative and participatory decision making, even though apartheid rule ended 16 years ago. However, as some of the literature show, and as will be seen below, efforts are being made in certain schools.

Schools B and C, for example, believe in a collective decision making strategy i.e. they go in line with the current general belief that says there is no one person in an organisation who has the answers to all the problems that happen on a daily basis, therefore there is a need for all the teachers to collectively discuss problems and come up with solutions. So, in School B, Principal B is strongly in favour of participatory decision making, and according to him teachers are involved in planning the important events of the school for the whole year as they contribute towards the drafting of the year plan. He said: *“You remember that I said decision-making is a collective effort, for instance as a school from time to time we sit down we discuss about the programme of the year like at what time should we practise for sport, when should we go out for the tour, which Grades etc.? It is not a principal’s thing you know, teachers must play a key role in decision-making. In the school environment, the key decision makers are the school management team (SMT), teachers and parents. Decision-making is a collective effort and all the stakeholders must have a say”*. Principal C had the same belief about decision making as he stated that: *“The key decision-makers in a school are the School Governing Body (SGB), principal, deputy principal, and teachers i.e. Post Level 1 educators”*.

Generally however, in schools you cannot compel educators to perform a certain task, instead you have to discuss with them so that they can be part of coming up with the plan of doing it. People who are the ones who will implement the decision must be involved in all the stages of decision making. PC said: *“Post Level 1 educators are the ones that are doing the spade work. If we as the SMT and SGB are going to decide about something and say to the teachers do this, if the teachers don’t want to do that they will not do it. Hence I’m saying they are the ones that are doing spade work and they are the ones that should be included in whatever decision that is taken”*. This view is also confirmed by DPC as he commented that: *“Post Level 1 educators must be part and parcel of the decision making process for the smooth running of the school ... Post Level 1 teachers should come up with their views as the*

decisions taken affect them in the school. When they come up with their views and also take decisions the sense of ownership is instilled in them". Additionally, DPC endorsed what was said by his principal and put it like this: *"Let's say that teachers have not been part of decision making and have to implement a decision, they would feel forced to it and start to drag their feet. But if they had been part and parcel of any decision taken they will be active"*. The above quotes show that there is a desire on the part of the principals and deputy principals in Schools B and C to involve Post Level 1 educators in decision making. The data above also show that teachers participate in decision making so that they can own it and make sure that it is implemented. This is similar to what Fullan (1993, p. 22) says when he makes the point that "you cannot mandate what matters", which means that you cannot assume that decisions taken by policy makers or leaders will be implemented. Instead, people who are affected by the problem must play a part in discussing the problem so that they can come up with possible solutions. Therefore, when teachers are involved in decision-making they will understand better how they arrived at the decisions and will believe in them and make sure that they are implemented. This therefore calls for principals and deputy principals to create the opportunity for Post Level 1 educators to participate in decision making.

In School B the principal is a leader of leaders which implies the sharing of responsibilities. This can only result from a participatory decision making approach. PB said: *"I don't know about other schools but in my school Post Level 1 educators must play a key role in decision-making. You must remember that a teacher is a leader; you see regardless that s/he is a Post Level 1 so educators play a key role in decision-making. They know they have to play a role in whatever we are doing at school"*. This is in line with what the National Educational Policy Act 27 of (1996) in the Norms and Standards for Educators as it states that the educator will "make decisions appropriate to the level, manage learning in the classroom, carry out classroom administrative duties efficiently and participate in school decision-making structures" (p. 47). This shows that policy at least understand a teacher as a leader in the classroom and also in the school as a whole. This is also confirmed by DPB as he stated that: *"Post Level 1 educators should be part and parcel of the decision making process in a school. When I say they should be part and parcel of the decision making process, as I have said already said that there are many sub-committees in a school which are responsible for the smooth running of the school so teachers should be involved in all these committees and make decisions on how these committees should work"*. This therefore shows that PB and DPB involve the Post Level 1 educators in decision making.

In organisations like a school, teamwork can also help it to run successfully. Thus, in School B in my study, which experienced a problem of teachers bunking their classrooms, tried to solve this problem through teamwork which included involvement of HODs, PB said: *“The decision was taken in the staff meeting that HODs should move around during their free periods and check if the educators are teaching in their classes during their periods or not, if the educator is not in the class we remind him or her so that s/he can attend to the learners”*. As this decision was taken in the staff meeting it shows that also Post Level 1 educators were part of the decision making process. My data confirm what is said by Robbins (2000, p. 77) as he argues that “when a number of people discuss a problem a good decision is likely to be taken, as groups bring more input into the decision making process. Groups lead to increased acceptance of a solution. Group members who participated in making decision are more likely to enthusiastically support the decision and encourage others to accept it”. Similarly, Van der Bank (2005, p. 31) states that “when people are involved in discussing the problem and seeking a solution that will bind them to a decision, it will become their decision and the problem will be solved by the team and not just by the manager or leader”. Also, Christie’s (2001) study shows that the schools in her study had management teams working alongside principals. Many of the principals stressed the importance of motivating staff to participate in decision making. This has also happened in School A during the staff meeting when they were formulating a school policy whereby the principal motivated the teachers to speak out their views. She did this because she wanted them to be part of the decision making process. However, this view might have been expressed simply because of my presence (as researcher) as all the participants in School A during the interviews said that the principal does not encourage participation in decision making. Finally, in School C there is evidence of team work and participatory decision making. PC said: *“In my school we are working as a team, I cannot be the one who is looking after the late comers; my educators also do it as this decision was taken by them in the staff meeting”*.

In general though, these data extracts support what is said by Barker (2001) cited in Hansson and Andersen (2007, no page number) in the context of poor performers and effective principals viz. that, “effective leaders motivate staff and learners to participate in decision-making”. They also echo the views expressed by one SMT participant in Christie, Butler and Potterton’s (2007) study when they said that they were doing well because they “motivated teachers and learners, they worked as a team, and there was co-operation, common vision, open communication and mutual trust” (p. 69).

When School B had the problem of late coming of both learners and teachers, the teachers were forced to engage in some self-reflection, the results of which were discussed in a staff meeting. As a group they came up with the following decision which shows a participative and democratic decision making process. DPB said: *“We decided that the gates must be locked from 08:00 to 08:30 for both learners and teachers so that teachers can be embarrassed to be locked outside with the learners. Now there are few learners that arrive late and no teachers arrive late except when a teacher has got a valid reason”*. Similarly, School C also experienced the problem of late coming by the learners (but not the teachers). To solve this problem, late comers were given extra written work which is of benefit to them. PC stated that: *“As you know that we are not allowed to beat the learners, as part of the discipline we are giving them extra written work and the due date to submit it. In my school we are working as a team, this decision was taken by the staff in a staff meeting”*. This data support The South African Task Team Report on educational management (1996, p. 3) which argues that: *“The task of the management at all levels in the education system is ultimately the creation and support of conditions under which teachers and their learners are able to achieve learning. Management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of the educational organisation engage e.g. parents, teachers, principal and learners”*. This view point is exactly what Fullan (1993, p. 39) was expressing when he said that *“Everybody must be a change agent, we cannot leave responsibility to others and change cannot be established by formal leaders working by themselves, therefore each and every teacher has the responsibility to help create an organisation capable of individual and collective inquiry”*. Also, the South African Constitution (1996c, p. 17) highlights that, *“the elections of April 1994, which marked the formal end of apartheid rule and a shift from authoritarian to democratic rule in South Africa, introduced a new South African Constitution and included an unequivocal commitment to representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency and public involvement”*. From what the above respondents have said, they give us the impression that these schools are democratic organisations in which distributed leadership is practised. This is in line with what Grant (2005) suggests about the way in which schools should be run and managed in this century as the policies are changing on a daily basis, *“One person can no longer be expected to lead and manage a school effectively, leadership must be encouraged as an essential role of all school staff”* (p. 46). Grant (*ibid*) points out that there was a time whereby autocratic leadership was working for schools during apartheid but because of the transformation in South African government which has also led to transformation in

education policies this autocratic leadership is no longer relevant. That is why collaboration and involvement of stakeholders in decision making is encouraged.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, even if people are involved in negotiations and discussions that lead to decision making it does not mean they will not always have the same opinion. In the South African context the most likely solution nowadays would be that the 'majority rule' would apply. This is confirmed by PB as he stated that: *"People must understand how democracy works. For instance, a decision can be taken that you find it is contrary to your belief but because it was a majority decision you have to comply with it"*. Under normal circumstances sometimes people have different opinions and therefore they have to resort to voting. DPB said: *"There are cases where we are supposed to vote; when there are disagreements we make use of the majority rule"*. School C had a problem of the teachers who bunked their periods and sat in the staffroom. This made the SMT to come up with the plan to monitor the teachers. PC stated that: *"First of all we as the SMT discussed this problem and took it to the staff so that they can come up with their proposals and finally take a decision. The decision was that the class representatives must use the subject register to indicate if the teacher was in class or not. Most teachers voted for it and made use of the majority rule as you know that not all the teachers are lazy to go to class"*.

Additionally, freedom of speech, which is one of the characteristics of democracy, is practised in School B, as DPB said: *"Everybody must be free to talk and nobody must be blamed for his or her idea. We are trying our best to consider all the ideas before taking a decision"*. This indeed also refers to the ideas of Post Level 1 educators when a decision is to be taken and relates very closely to another key element of effective distributed leadership viz. transparency. But, the latter is only possible if the *principal* is transparent and reports honestly to the teachers. From the DPB's responses it was clear that he believes in transparency as he stated that: *"If you are working with people you must be transparent. Nothing must be hidden. Nothing should happen by surprise. Everything should be clear beforehand"*. This is possible through the use of participatory decision making as the DPB noted, saying: *"Participatory decision making has helped my school to be run smoothly as the teachers own the decisions as they were part of them. The school is running smoothly, it is owned by everybody, there is co-operation in our school, we work together"*. My data speak to the literature as The South African Schools Act 84 of (1996), for example encourages transparency, communication and involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making.

As already established, in this study, Post Level 1 educators were also interviewed to find out the extent to which they confirmed or contradicted what was said by their principals and deputy principals. EB confirmed what was said by her principal and deputy principal that all the stakeholders including the Post Level 1 educators are involved in decision making. She said: “*SGB, teachers, religious organisations and political organisations play a vital role in decision making in a school*”. Post Level 1 educators must be involved in decision making if they are expected to implement it, as this will make them own the decision and therefore resistance will be avoided. This is corroborated by EB as she stated that: “*Post Level 1 educators are field workers because they can start from scratch up until the end of the activity therefore they must be involved in decision making*”. Also, EC stated that: “*The key decision makers in my school are the SMT and teachers*”. This confirms what was said by PC and DPC.

The responses from the participants in Schools B and C which show a collective decision making process are supported by what I noticed in the minute books of their previous staff meetings. An example is when, in School B, the learners requested to go on a tour. This tour was for Natural Sciences for Grades 7, 8 and 9, whereby learners were going to learn about different types of animals in a zoo. The teachers discussed this in their staff meeting and also decided on the date for the tour. This shows that learners’ and educators’ voices are considered. On another occasion, teachers in School B discussed the issue of an upcoming sports match and agreed to start the games for various codes at 11 o’clock.

In School C, in a meeting dated 23 January 2009, the minutes of the staff meeting show that they were discussing the problems they were encountering which included a lady teacher who was on leave due to the illness of her child. One educator volunteered herself to occupy the class concerned and also proposed the name of another teacher. This idea was seconded by another teacher and was minuted as the final decision. Another problem in School C was the issue of the learners who did not come back after break time. In the minutes it appeared that one teacher proposed that the class teachers must mark the attendance register and note those learners who did not return from break time, and that those learners should be punished on the following day. It does not appear what type of punishment would be administered but the principal asked what would happen if learners continued to leave the school after break even after they had been punished. One educator responded by saying that if they continued, then they must be sent home to fetch their parents. This issue was supported by the educators and then the meeting was closed. From what has been discussed above in School C, one can note

that every proposal is considered by everyone, and that the educators' views were as significant as those of members of the SMT.

In contrast, in School A, the principal only talked about herself. For example, she said: *“I drafted the code of conduct for the learners and unpacked the South African Schools Act to the parents; I also made sure that the learners had a valid reason for being absent”* (PA). This suggests that this principal tends to work in isolation and takes decisions by herself, suggesting that distributed leadership is not practised regularly in this school. Additionally, she uses the word ‘delegate’ not ‘sharing responsibilities’, which shows that she is the boss who tells others what to do. Furthermore, she work-shopped her teachers to show that she is the ‘boss’ and that they must obey her, as she continued to say: *“I would like to say it is impossible for me to do everything in this school and some teachers think that if you delegate some duties to them you are lazy to do your job. Through work-shopping them about legislations like Employment of Educators Act (EEA) 76 of (1998) I opened their eyes as they know that EEA states that an educator commits misconduct if s/he fails to carry out a lawful order or routine instruction without a valid reason”*. She did not create a space where she and the teachers could discuss and negotiate how they perceive each other and their responsibilities. Additionally, sometimes PA ignores the views of the teachers if they are against her views. She said: *“There must be one principal in a school or else there will be no order. I must not listen to everybody and must not take any point because some other teachers can drive the school to the forest or to the dogs [usually people use this language when they refer to a dysfunctional school]. Allow Post Level 1(PL1) educators to discuss issues but your eyes and ears must be open enough when a decision is to be taken and if you think that the decision is not good for the school do not accept that decision, instead convince them to change”*. This makes the teachers to be less interested to contribute during the staff meeting, something I noticed during my visit to School A. When a meeting was held to amend the School Policy, teachers kept quiet when the principal asked them about reporting time in their school considering the fact that they have to work for not less than 7 hours per day. The principal encouraged the teachers to raise their proposals as they looked reluctant to contribute. My reading of the situation was that they were reluctant because they knew that their principal sometimes does not accept their proposals. This points to the likelihood of this principal being an authoritative leader, and thus from my data and my observations of the school, there are no signs of distributed leadership happening in this school as the ideas from Post Level 1 educators are often ignored by PA.

In addition to what was said by PA, DPA, like her principal, used ‘I’ not “we”, which suggests that she does not often involve other staff members. She said: *“I attended the workshop on conflict resolution. When I came back to school I trained the staff so now they are able to resolve conflict on their own. In each and every term in our school there was a case reported to the office of the principal about the teachers who were quarrelling, but now it is no longer happening. Instead you hear rumours that there was misunderstanding between two teachers but was solved without being reported to the principal”*.

DPA on the other hand, was not confident enough to respond to the question about who should be the key decision makers in a school. This made me suspect that she was trying to remember what the policy from the National Department of Education says about decision making, not exactly what is happening in her school. She responded by saying: *“As far as I know all the members of the SMT but I think the key people are principal and deputy principal”*. The members of the SMT are principal, deputy principal and HODs, thus, she did not mention teachers’ involvement in decision making.

The lack of transparency and non-involvement of Post Level 1 educators in decision making in School A creates problems. The quote below from DPA indicates one such problem that occurred in her school:

“There was a problem regarding transparency whereby educators were complaining that there was no transparency in the school. The teachers were asking a number of questions like: ‘Who is supposed to elect the class representatives?’, as the principal moved class by class saying that the learners must elect and submit the names to her without the knowledge of the class teachers. The teachers were unhappy about this. The teachers also complained that the principal hired and fired temporal [sic] teachers without involving the staff. Another complaint was that the principal was not involving staff on budgeting”.

The principal’s style of leadership did not allow for transparency and thus there was tension between the principal and staff. There was no democratic decision making ethos in School A and this worried the deputy principal, as she said: *“I think there is a lot that needs to be changed in my school. For instance, there are not enough committees and sometimes the educators suggest that all the committees must be formed and involved in any decision making”*. Thus there is a lack of trust between the principal and staff in School A. PA said: *“When I attend a workshop I would like to go with a member of staff because sometimes when I give the report back some teachers think that I’m creating my own rules”*.

Additionally, PA said: *“There are teachers who want to disrupt teaching and learning; who wanted me to get rid of the subject registers that were used by the class representatives as they wanted to continue bunking classes”*. Seemingly bunking by South African teachers is common as two schools that participated in my study mentioned it which confirms the findings of the research conducted by Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007, p. 3), (see Chapter 3). One teacher in School O in Christie *et al.*'s study stated that they were doing well because *“the principal always reminds teachers to be in class at all time”*. This shows that some teachers bunked their classes as there was going to be no need for the principal to always remind the teachers if they were always attending to their periods. In this study, there are clearly differences in my 3 schools on how they solved this problem as in School A and C there was a register used to indicate if the teacher was in class or not.

From the responses of EA one can see that there is little consultation and involvement of stakeholders in decision making. He did not state this directly but it can be inferred by the following opinion he offered viz.: *“I believe that all the stakeholders i.e. SMT, educators, SGB and parents should be involved in decision making since we are living in a democratic society”*. From the follow up interviews he was requested to explain what he has just said above and stated that: *“Sometimes they are not involved at all, or sometimes are invited to discuss something that the principal had already decided about. You can discover that if the principal does not like your proposal she will invite other ideas or she can come up with her idea and someone from the SMT supports her and the issue will be closed”*. This is similar to what was said by PA above, that she scrutinises the proposals and if she feels that one is not good, she convinces the educators to change their views.

EA answered my research question about the role of the principal and deputy principal in decision making in a school as he stated that the principal and deputy principal should facilitate the inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making including PL1 educators, as he said: *“Whenever the decision is to be taken the managers i.e. the principal and deputy principal must make sure that all the stakeholders participate in decision-making”*. This is similar to the findings of the research which was conducted by Grant and Singh (2009, p. 10) which showed that *“the opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles beyond their core function of classroom teaching had recently surfaced in the schools. A teacher in one of the schools said that opportunities to lead were greater than they were in the past, for example, he said that they are involved in policy making by the principal”*.

In the previous meetings in School A, one can notice from the minute book that Principal A told teachers what they must or must not do. In one of the meetings she reminded the staff that class teachers must mark the attendance registers for their respective classes. She also complained about the high rate of absenteeism by educators and stated that she would recommend to the Department of Education that unpaid leave be registered against those teachers who continuously absent themselves. She was also concerned about the late coming by some educators and told them that the school starts at 07:45. The minutes do not show the questions or suggestions or discussions by the members of the staff and therefore there is no evidence of collective decision making. Despite many of the education policies in place which foreground democracy and involvement of stakeholders in decision making, in practice it appears that little has changed in School A in my study. My data reveal findings that echo work done by Emihovich and Battaglia (2000) cited in Williams (2006, p. 2), referred to earlier in Chapter 3, who conducted research in Canada about the prevalence of collaborative leadership in schools. Their study found that “most principals still perceived their primary roles to be program managers rather than collaborative professionals”. Also, Jackson (2000) cited in Williams (2006, p. 2) considered the hesitancy among principals to share leadership as partly due to the fact that the “school effectiveness literature continues to propagate the view of leadership centred around ‘strong head teachers with dynamic or forceful personal qualities’ rather than leadership that is widely spread among educational stakeholders”.

In contrast to what was said by DPA above, that the key decision makers are the members of the SMT, she suddenly included the Post Level 1 educators when she was asked the role that must be played by Post Level 1 educators in decision making. She clearly quickly recalled the policy that Post Level 1 educators must be involved in decision making as she stated that: *“Of course Post Level 1 educators are also the vital people at school. They should be involved in any decision making of a school. For instance, when a school policy is being formulated they can play an important role. For instance, when the rules and regulations of the school are designed I think they can play a major role there and even in budgeting in fact in everything”*.

5.2.2 The inevitability of hierarchies

Despite policies that are issued by the National Department of Education that promote participation of Post Level 1 educators in decision making, and as intimated earlier, hierarchical structures still exist in many South African schools and formal boundaries, embedded in power relations, remain between the SMT and Post Level 1 educators. These

boundaries deprive schools of the benefits that can be achieved from participatory decision making.

Although Post Level 1 educators are involved in decision making in Schools B and C, DPB in my study believes that there are decisions that do not involve Post Level 1 educators and therefore they need not be consulted on them. He said: *“When coming to the decisions that do not involve Post Level 1 educators, let us say for example there is a principals’ meeting, the principal is busy, and therefore, the deputy principal should attend that meeting and represent the principal. In the instance whereby the deputy principal is also not available, the SMT should meet and decide who can attend that meeting from the members of the SMT”*. A follow up question was asked to the DPB as to whether he can support the idea that the principal can request a Post Level 1 educator to represent him in the principals’ meeting or not. He said he cannot support that idea as he clearly stated that: *“I can be surprised and I don’t understand why he can do this, because if he is busy he can make use of the deputy principal or the HODs”*. In other words, what can be inferred from this is that matters to which a principal must respond are best handled by a deputy principal in his/her absence as a Post Level 1 educator is unlikely to be sufficiently informed or hold the expertise necessary to making the required decision/s. This could be seen to reflect Van der Bank’s (2005, p. 31) thoughts on who is ‘able’ to make decisions and who needs to be consulted. Thus he says, *“Group decision-making does not mean that all staff members must participate in all decisions. There are two criteria which could be used to determine which staff members should participate in which decisions. The first of these criteria is relevancy which refers to the interest a specific person has concerning the problem and the subsequent decision. The second criterion is expertise which is determined by the extent to which the participants in the decision-making are qualified by means of training, interest and experience”*. Even if one agrees with DPB and Van der Bank, it is difficult not to construct both responses as confirming Ogawa and Bossert’s (2000) cited in Williams (2006, p. 2), position that *“the primary approach to current school leadership is still based on a technical-rational perspective that promotes hierarchical structures and prevents substantive collaboration among school professionals”*. As the above data show, this hierarchy is evident in all the schools that participated in my study.

During staff meetings in all three schools in my study, the principals or deputy principals sit in front as they always chair the meetings. While this could be constructed as just a practical arrangement, I believe it reflects traditional practices in schools and stems from a ‘Great

Man' theory of leadership. Thus, this seating arrangement can also be seen as reflecting 'inequality amongst peers' and suggests that strong power relations certainly still exist in these schools. This is endorsed by DPC: *"A staff meeting is chaired by the principal or the deputy principal and he announces the agenda. He sits in front of the staff members and being in contact of all the proceedings of the agenda e.g. controlling the questions for clarity and views of the staff adherence on the items being discussed"*. Also, DPB stated that, *"Principal should sit in front of the teachers; secretary should take minutes and should sit next to the principal"*. All 3 educators that participated in my study confirmed what was said by their principals and deputy principals about the position that the principal and deputy principal take when chairing the meeting in their schools. For example EC stated that: *"The staff meeting is held in a boardroom. The chairperson who is the principal or deputy principal must sit in front of the staff so that everybody can see and hear him"*. EB reported the same experience: *"The principal or deputy principal sits in front of the teachers and is the chairperson of the meeting. Next to him is the secretary. If there is a financial issue, the treasurer sits next to them"*. Furthermore, EA agreed with the above respondents in respect to the position in which the chairperson should sit during the staff meeting: *"The principal sits in front. She leads and guides the meeting"*.

Additionally, decision making around the agenda in School A is very controlled by the principal. The principal, deputy principals and educators in my study stated that the agenda for staff meetings is drafted by the principal. Thus PA said: *"Not everybody can be called to draft the agenda. In any sports team for example, it is the chairperson and the secretary that come up with the agenda. In our case it is the principal or deputy principal that leads in drafting the agenda together with the SMT. Teachers will come with their items in the AOB (any other business) stage"*. This was endorsed by DPA as she stated that: *"It is the principal who drafts the agenda, before a staff meeting. The principal calls an SMT meeting and explains the need for a staff meeting. She then briefly explains the contents in her agenda and asks if the SMT members have got any items to add"*. This is also confirmed by EA: *"The principal drafts the agenda for the staff meeting and after she has exhausted her items during the staff meeting she invites the items to be discussed from the staff"*. Additionally, DPA said: *"In a staff meeting it consists of a chairperson, secretary and the members. The chairperson who is the principal or deputy principal sits in front of the members so that s/he can be visible to all of them"*.

School B had a slightly different approach in drafting the agenda as compared to School A. Although the SMT drafts the agenda, before the meeting starts the principal announces the agenda and requests the teachers to amend or to adopt it. This is an important move to note as it suggests that School B is making shifts in terms of who controls events. So PB said: *“We draft the agenda as the SMT; I announce it at the beginning of the meeting. Of course it is a proposed agenda. I announce it and then declare the members to amend or endorse or adopt it”*. This has been endorsed by DPB: *“It is the principal that drafts the agenda and the teachers amend it before the meeting starts”*. Similarly to Schools A and B, in School C the principal drafts the agenda. PC said: *“I’m the one who draft the agenda. When we will have a meeting first of all there is a paper that circulates saying that we are going to have a meeting on a particular day, it is going to state the time it gives the agenda. I, the principal sit in front and the secretary who is going to take the minutes sits next to me. I have to sit in a place that everybody can see me and I see those who want to give some deliberations in the meeting”*.

What has been said by the interviewees is corroborated by what I observed during the staff meetings when I visited these schools. In School A the principal was chairing a meeting, the teachers were sitting in a U-shaped form and the principal was sitting at the ‘top’ of the U-shape. In School B the principal was sitting in front of the teachers and was chairing the meeting. All the respondents in School C said the principal or deputy principal who used to chair the meetings sits in front, but during my visit the seating was in two parallel rows i.e. two rows facing each other with the principal sitting in the row near the door, and was the first person near the door.

This shows that in these schools in my study there are people who believe they have got more power than others and these people are the principal, deputy principal and heads of department as these people essentially plan meetings and control the drafting and/or presentation of the agenda. The involvement of Post Level 1 educators in drafting the agenda and chairing the meeting is limited, particularly in Schools A and C.

In matters aside from agendas for meetings, however, all the stakeholders in School C are involved in decision making to a certain degree. DPC said: *“All the stakeholders in the school (site steward council and teachers) are involved in decision making, but the key decision makers are the SGB and SMT”*. Although an issue is discussed by all the teachers in School C and they raise suggestions, the principal holds himself accountable, makes sure that good decisions are taken. This is confirmed by DPC as he said: *“An issue is put forward in a*

meeting for discussions but at the end of the day someone must be held accountable and that person is the principal of the school who is the mouth piece of the Department of Education. Therefore the principal must make sure that the decision does not contradict with the government policies. For example the school cannot take the decision that says learners who have not paid school fund must be chased home or should not get their progress reports”.

Interestingly, sometimes teachers undermine their own potential by expecting the SMT to come up with decisions. DPC said: *“I would like to change the attitude of all the stakeholders to be hands on in decision making when asked to do so. I would like to encourage them not to look down upon themselves as this won’t do the school any good, as sometimes teachers expect that it is the SMT that should come up with decisions”.* I have also noticed this in my school. For example, when the school is planning to organise a freshers’ match i.e. a match between the new learners and the returning learners at the beginning of the year, the sports committee asks the principal to give them the time to start the games. The principal has no idea about the number of games that will be played per ‘code’ i.e. the categories of sports and related age groups. Yet the sports committee expects the principal to come up with the time when the games can be started. The sports committee is supposed to present to the principal with the number of codes that will be played and the number of games per code, like in soccer there will be a team for 13 years and under, 17 years and under etc. and thereafter propose the starting time having considered all the different codes.

EA in my study believed that the principal, deputy principal and the SMT should be decision-makers in a school. EA said: *“There are different departments in the school like science department, they draft their own policies and should be submitted to the SMT so that the SMT can judge and make changes if necessary and finally approve it”.* This shows that here too, people at the top of the hierarchy are relied upon to make a final decision.

5.2.3 Parents as invited participants in decision making processes

Prior to 1994 in South African schools, there was little involvement of parents in decision making especially in rural areas. Parents were called to a meeting by the school principal to be told, for example, how much must they add to the school fund of their children, the additional amount that must be paid as a building fund, and so on. There were no negotiations or discussions in these issues. In my experience as a high school learner there was an additional R50 levied for a building fund on new learners i.e. Grade 10, which was known as Standard 8. This school had about 500 learners each year in Standard 8. Surprisingly over

a period of 10 years there were no new classrooms that were built. I even thought that Standard 8 learners paid this extra money because it was not considered 'right' they just use the classrooms that were built with the money of other former learners without contributing themselves. The parents who were paying the school fund would not be given the platform to know or ask the annual expenditure of the school.

But as explained in Chapter 1, the new Government of National Unity in South Africa in all the departments including the Department of Education, formulated a number of policies that promote transparency and inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making. One of these policies is the South African Council of Educators Act 31 of (2000) which states that parents must be partners in education and must be involved in all the activities of the school. My data show this partnership-in-action through PA saying: *"To minimise absenteeism in our school I requested the parents to work together with the school to ensure that their children attend everyday"*. Additionally, what has been noted about School B is that it is a community school. Thus PB said: *"As a principal I make it a point that I call upon all the stakeholders to participate, for instance I must consider parents because parents own the school, must be involved in all the activities of the school and decision-making"*.

Some of the problems in schools, like maintaining discipline, were solved through involvement of parents as PA said: *"It was not easy as we had to maintain discipline without using corporal punishment. Detention did not help as we tried to substitute corporal punishment with it. Finally things were better after I decided to call the parents of the misbehaving learners"*. This supports the South African Schools Act 84 of (1996, p. 36), as referenced earlier, which lays down that "all schools must establish governing bodies on which parents have the largest numerical representation and must be involved in decision-making". My data also confirm international literature as Chapman (1993) argues that in Australia "the school system attempted to decentralise administrative arrangements and devolve responsibility to the local level and was necessary for policy makers, system-level and school administrators and representatives of teachers' and parents' associations to address tensions by involving teachers, parents, learners and administrators in local site-based management and decision- making" (p. 3).

PB is particularly concerned about the attendance of parents at parents' meetings and strives for a 100% attendance. He said: *"I would like to see a lot of involvement especially on the side of the parents. Sometimes parents become less interested with the affairs of the school."*

You call them to a meeting, you find that some of them do not come; at the end of the day the decisions that are taken may appear to be the decisions of the individuals. It is like a principle that whatever decision that is taken it must be a collective decision". EB endorsed what has been said by her principal as she stated that: *"After a learner has come late for the third time or has absented himself or herself without reporting, we call the parent because sometimes the parent does not know whether the child is right or wrong, we want to find out the problem from the parent"*. This shows that Post Level 1 educators also participate in engaging with the parents to promote regular school attendance by the learners. This also shows that Post Level 1 educators take the initiative of making the decision of calling the parents when learners arrive late at school. Therefore, my data endorse Senge's view that "for school improvement efforts to be successful, teachers, parents, community and business partners, administrators and learners must be involved in discussions and making of decisions" (1990, p. 36). My findings, as far as the eagerness of parents to participate in decision making in schools is concerned, are similar to that of Christie (2001, pp. 56-57). She says:

"In most schools that participated in my study, parents were not involved in day-to-day issues, and played little or no role in decision making. Some principals commented that parents were not interested in school matters. Other principals noted that parents often saw the school as having responsibility for their children and for running itself, and attempts to involve parents were viewed as the school not fulfilling its responsibility. Other principals mentioned that in poor communities, parent participation in the schools was seen as an activity warranting payment. Lastly, many schools mentioned the importance of having parents as a backstop in discipline, but only a minority told of parental support in activities such as fund-raising and governance".

Although parents were not part of my study, the above extracts and related observations, and the literature (as discussed in Chapter 3) show that parents must also be involved in decision making. Though most schools in rural areas are still struggling to involve parents in decision making, all the schools in South Africa have SGBs that are formed by parents, teachers and learners. Thus, the mere fact that these structures exist shows a step to involve all stakeholders in decision-making. According to South African Schools Act 84 of (1996), the key positions like chairperson and treasurer are occupied by the parent component.

5.2.4 Teachers lead more in extra-curricular activities

In this study, the data show that teachers *do* lead in informal positions like being the chairperson of a committee within the school, and at one level this definitely promotes distributive leadership. However, it is important to note the contexts in which teachers are ‘allowed’ to lead. EB, for example, said: *“Yes we had lack of furniture so it was decided in the staff meeting that we form a committee that will organise people to fix broken furniture. Post Level 1 educators were involved in taking this decision and some of them are also members of this committee. The chairperson of this committee is a Post Level 1 educator”*. Teachers are more involved and play a leading role in sport in the school, as PC said that: *“the sport organiser who is a Post Level 1 educator chairs the meeting for sport”*. Additionally, EC states that: *“I organised athletics”*. This is also confirmed by EB as she stated that: *“Yes as a sport organiser I encouraged learners to participate in extra-curricular activities and now we are participating in competitions like love life games and Unologa games”*. This is confirmed by PC as he mentioned that: *“For example let us take the extra-curricular activities, I, the principal I don’t say that I’m not going to be involved in monitoring how the extra-curricular activities are done, in most cases the most people that are more involved in extra-curricular activities i.e. sport are Post Level 1 educators. I, the principal can see to it that all these things are happening”*. This confirms the findings of Grant *et al.* (2010), that teachers play a leading role in extra-curricular activities. Although teachers participate in the formulation of school policies like code of conduct, discipline safety and security, departmental policies (science department, language department etc.) PB and DPA respectively mentioned that teachers organised and chaired meetings for sport: *“Teachers chair the meeting for a number of times, for instance there are extra-curricular activities, so in a meeting for sport there is a committee responsible for sport, they convene the meeting, and there is a committee in charge of examinations. They draft the time table and invigilation roster. I’m not the one that must chair the meeting for sport or examinations”*. DPA was asked what the meeting was about that was chaired by the Post Level 1 educator and she responded by saying: *“It was a meeting where the sport council had issues to be discussed, it was their representative who was chairing the meeting and the principal and deputy principal were just ordinary participants like other teachers”*. Thus, the data given here show (and this also confirms Grant’s (2008b) work on ‘zones’ and ‘roles’), that in many South African schools, Post Level 1 educators are given opportunities to lead, but that these opportunities lie largely in the context of extra-curricular activities, and where mundane school issues e.g. repairing broken furniture, organising an invigilation timetable

etc. are concerned. There is therefore, much still to be done if teachers are to become significant leaders and decision makers in schools.

5.3 Barriers to distributed leadership

The data from my study suggest that there are two key barriers to distributed leadership in the schools that participated in my study viz. the issue of accountability, and the closely related issue of implementing policy. However, interestingly, these barriers are most evident in School A, and given what has already been shown about PA's attitude to the distribution of decision making, perhaps this was to be expected. She said, for example: *"Invite all the teachers to a meeting, discuss issues and allow them to participate in discussion but as a principal you must know that if any wrong decision is taken by the school you are the one who is accountable for that and also the SMT. I cannot say to the Ward Manager it is the majority of teachers who took a decision so go and ask them. A recent incident that occurred is that of incoming and outgoing matches. My teachers did not want to have a match during the weekend. I had to force them as the department is saying we cannot have a match during the teaching days. There were only two options to my teachers i.e. to have a match on a weekend (Saturday or Sunday) or not to have a match at all"*. PA was also concerned with carrying out policy. Again the quote below supports this claim. Although the *issue* has already been referred to, the relevance of this extract to the discussion on 'barriers' is clear. She said:

"I reduced absenteeism on the side of the teachers. I am a fair and a nice person. I have discovered that teachers were misusing my personality as they used to absent themselves more frequently. This worried me as my teachers used to take normal sick leave. If the teacher was absent for one or two days and took a normal sick leave they knew that there was no need to attach a medical certificate. But I convinced them that if I discovered a pattern in a leave days taken by a teacher I will request the medical certificate even if the teacher has taken only 2 days of sick leave, according to the Department of Education you attach a medical certificate if you have taken 3 or more days of sick leave. Now the rate of absenteeism is low".

On the other hand, in School C during the staff meeting that I observed, the teachers were discussing about time in and time out. The principal reminded the teachers that teachers are supposed to work for not less than seven hours a day according to the national policy of the Department of Education, showing that it is sometimes very necessary for a principal to step

in with information, particularly about policies, if it looks like the teachers in a school are unaware that they are bound by more formal constraints than just a majority vote around 'preference'.

Another tension which acts as a barrier, but which is part of those just discussed is that of suspicion or the lack of trust between the principal and teachers. PA, for example, raised the point that there were teachers who liked to disrupt order in the school. The following quote proves this; although it has been used above it is also relevant here. She said: *"There must be one principal in a school or else there will be no order, I must not listen to everybody and must not take any point because some other teachers can drive the school to the forest or to the dogs. Allow Post Level 1 educators to discuss issues but your eyes and ears must be open enough when a decision is to be taken and if you think that the decision is not good for the school do not accept that decision, instead convince them to change"*. This was corroborated during my observation of the staff meeting in School C as one teacher was complaining about the reduction of powers from the class teachers as they were no longer allowed to issue permission slips to learners who want to go home earlier because of sickness or any other reason. The response from PC was that: *"when there were many people who issued the permission slips there was no order, a number of learners were seen outside the school premises during teaching time saying that they asked permission from their various class teachers"*.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented data collected from within the three different schools that participated in my study. The data have shown that in these schools there is a recognition that no one person can make decisions for a whole school and no one person can perform all the activities. The way in which this 'recognition' is enacted, however, varies within the three schools. Basically though, all three schools accept that Post Level 1 educators must be involved in decision-making. Parents are also not left out of the equation as they were, for example, informed about the behaviour of their children, and invited to participate in school affairs. However, people in formal leadership positions like the principals, deputy principals and heads of department were the ones who were mainly organising meetings and chairing them. Post Level 1 educators were more involved in organising and chairing meetings for such things as sport and other extra-curricular activities, fixing broken furniture, and organising an examination timetable and the invigilation timetable. Schools B and C believe in a collective decision making and evidence of team work was noticed. In contrast, in School

A there was no evidence of collective decision making as the principal was seen as the 'main strong man' in the school - despite being a woman! It has also been suggested that people in formal leadership positions like the principal, deputy principal and HODs should promote distributed leadership. Generally, schools are still hierarchically structured and executive powers still rest with the principals. But Schools B and C recognise teachers as leaders irrespective of their post levels. Transparency and engagement of teachers in decision making have been pinpointed to assist implementation of decisions. Levels of accountability, lack of trust between the principal and staff and sticking to policy were identified as barriers to distributed leadership.

In the next chapter recommendations for a more participatory approach in decision making are discussed, as well as suggestions for further areas of research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In the light of all discussions and data presentation that has gone before, it should now be possible to propose answers to my two research questions, and comment on what they reveal about the decision making processes in the three schools in my study. As a final reminder to the reader my two research questions were:

- (i) What is the role of the principal and deputy principal in decision-making processes in a school?
- (ii) To what extent do these processes facilitate the inclusion of Post Level 1 educators?

6.2 More rhetoric than enactment: The questions answered?

In summary, the data show that in all three schools in my study there is greater evidence of the rhetoric of distributed leadership than its enactment. Having said that, it is also true to say that Schools B and C exhibit ‘emergent’ leadership (after Muijs and Harris, 2007). In Schools B and C, it is also possible to find evidence of ‘dispersed’ leadership (after Gunter, 2005), where teachers have the freedom to choose the areas in which they will show leadership. This dispersed form can be distinguished from ‘authorised’ leadership where teachers get to ‘show leadership’ but the principal decides where and facilitates it happening (*ibid*). In Schools B and C there was an attempt to extend boundaries of leadership to Post Level 1 educators (see Muijs and Harris, 2003) to allow for Post Level 1 educators’ involvement in leadership and decision making, which had the effect of improving the educators’ morale (see Mbigi, 1994). By involving Post Level 1 educators in decision making the possibility of retaining educators in the schools is increased (see Smylie, 1995). Educators would be more likely also, to bring changes to their practices and implement decisions as they were involved in making them (see Fullan, 1993). In Schools B and C, educators, heads of department, principals and deputy principals learn from one another as they engage in discussions that lead to decision making. This reflects important features of what Senge (1990) calls a learning organisation. When this happens there is a high possibility of producing higher learner achievement as the teachers are involved in decision making (Anderson, 2002). In Schools B and C there is also evidence of teachers working as a team to make decisions. This concurs with the views of Mesch and Tyala (2008) that teams solve problems creatively.

In contrast, in School A, the data show that there was only restricted leadership and autocratic leadership, that is, teachers played no part in decision-making in important areas such as school policies on curriculum and medium of instruction etc. and there was no negotiation around issues, so no evidence of distributed leadership (after Fullan and Miles, 1993). This can make educators unwilling to implement decisions taken by principal and deputy principal. When the educators are not involved in decision making their morale might be low and the performance of the learners might be poor. Principal A uses her power to influence her teachers to change their ideas when she does not like the proposals, which agrees with the definition of power by Heywood (2000) cited in Gunter (2005) that power is the ability to influence another by shaping what he or she thinks wants or needs. Principal A supports her action of influencing teachers to change their ideas by saying she is accountable for any decisions made. This confirms what Gunter (2005, p. 43) says, as she says that “power is about influence, and this is tied up with a range of practices around authority, legitimacy, accountability and responsibility”. In School A the principal does, however, sometimes *delegate* some duties to teachers, but the lack of trust in her educators leads her to limit what these might be. Thus, she epitomises someone who dares not put trust in others in case they “do not honour that trust and, in so doing, the principal is left accountable for the task poorly done” (MacBeath, 2005, cited in Grant *et al.*, 2010, p. 404).

In all the 3 schools in my study, hierarchical structures still exist. However, data show clearly that a hierarchy is not always bad and sometimes is unavoidable and will not always create problems. There are job descriptions for all the employees and there is no way that one can run away from that. My data show that if, for example, the principal is away, a person who will act on his/her behalf is the deputy principal. Nevertheless, these hierarchical structures can also cause barriers to distributive leadership as noted above, but this cannot be simplistically understood. Issues of accountability *must* be taken into account, especially where the principal is concerned (Van der Bank, 2005). Although the Department of Education encourages democratic decision making, my data show, as does my own experience, that the principal is in trouble if a wrong decision is taken at a school which may bring the school or the Department of Education into disrepute. During the investigation of such a problem the investigators will not take into consideration the names or the number of teachers who voted for this particular idea. Instead the principal will be accountable for that decision.

After the democratic elections in 1994 there was a need to prepare the people in general so that they can understand and comply with the principles of democracy which includes participation of all the stakeholders in decision making. Also the Department of Education had to prepare its employees for the new era. In schools, people in management positions like principals, deputy principals and heads of department were the first group to be developed hence Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007) believe that the principal who is the head of the school, can promote or hinder distributive leadership, and in fact *should* make sure that distributive leadership takes place.

Learning about ways in which to distribute leadership, in the early years of democracy, was done through various workshops that were organised by the Department of Education. My data show that principals and deputy principals did not rely only on those workshops but engaged themselves with various Higher Education Institutions for distance education. This has resulted in positive benefits for these leaders; at least as far as decision making is concerned in the two schools that participated in my study viz. Schools B and C, as they facilitated educator involvement in making decisions. This reflects the emerging acceptance in the 'new' world of globalisation and technological advancement, already noted in this dissertation on several occasions, that there is no stage whereby one has learnt all there is to know. In this current era, therefore, the concept of 'life-long learning' is taking hold in a range of contexts, but particularly that of education. This is because new information is always needed to solve the existing problems. That is why the National Education Policy Act (1996, p. A-47) says a teacher must perform seven roles in which one of them is that, "a teacher must be a life-long learner". Although the word 'teacher' is used here, the policy intention is that all 'educators' i.e. principals, deputy principals and heads of department included, should subscribe to this role.

In trying to fulfil the above role all the deputy principals and Principals A and B that participated in my study were developing themselves through attending formal workshops and furthering their studies. To support this point PA said: "*I attended workshops on South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of (1996), Employment of Educators Act (EEA) 76 of (1998) and South African Council of Educators Act (SACE) 31 of (2000). These workshops helped me to be able to draft the school policy*". From PB's responses it is clear that the training he had received when doing Honours in Education Leadership and Management has helped him to involve staff in decision making. He said: "*The training was effective considering the fact that it was talking about some of the principles like democracy, inclusion of stakeholders in*

decision making in a school, and now I am involving my staff and stakeholders in decision making". In addition, although PB had a four year University degree, he continued furthering his studies, saying: *"I did Honours in Educational Leadership and Management with Potchefstroom University"*, thus providing further evidence of his engagement with life-long learning. Also, DPA stated that: *"Most fortunately our department organised a workshop on leadership and management whereby we were equipped about the necessary skills needed by a manager of a school, there is a lot that was said about school organisation, administration and conflict resolution"*. On the same note, DPC stated that: *"The formal training in leadership and management I have received was from Ikhwezi Project and the other one was from the Education Provincial Officials, though it was in the form of a workshop. What was entailed in my training was as follows: School governance, school administration, management of school finances and resources, personnel management, labour relations, human resource development and curriculum management"*. Similarly, DPB said that: *"I've attended the management workshops like financial management, extra-curricular workshop, fund raising, election of SGB, subcommittees and how do they work"*. The data thus confirm what is said by Hansson and Andersen (2007, np) viz. *"there is a common understanding that school leadership can be learned"*. As the Department of Education organises workshops and the principals and deputy principals improve their qualifications through furthering their studies, a very positive spin-off taking hold thus seems to be that of increasingly involving Post Level 1 educators in decision making. DPC confessed that after attending the workshop he became a better manager: *"I think the workshop that I attended which was about classroom observation and delegation was very effective as it made me a better manager than I was before and I manage to run the school smoothly. I learned that teachers should draft the time-table for observing them in the classroom, which was not happening before, it was me who used to tell them the date in which I wanted to visit them. Again I'm not the one who is doing everything, I delegate them and they feel that they are the members of the school, which is good"*. This response from DPC shows that Post Level 1 educators are becoming participatory decision makers in the school.

The above discussion shows that schools in the same context can differ in the way in which they work, as the principals and deputy principals in Schools B and C trust the Post Level 1 educators and have confidence in them that they can make good decisions in developing their schools. Whereas in School A the principal and deputy principal seem to fear that by

allowing educators to participate in decision making, ‘then authority and power could be undermined and weakened’.

6.3 Recommendations for changes in school decision making practices

In the light of the above discussion, the following recommendations can be made in this regard.

6.3.1 Approaches to decision making

There can be no fixed formula for running schools and what has worked in one school may not work in other schools, so the following recommendations should be seen as ‘broadly’ applicable. That is, if a school wanted to take them up, each would have to be considered in the light of the contextual factors governing that particular school.

Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the principal should create a secure, democratic environment in which they can reflect confidently and honestly on what they are doing at school, and invite teachers to think as freely, confidently and honestly as well. If this environment is in place, then everyone will be able to comment and come up with proposals and take decisions collectively, unlike a situation whereby teachers are told what they must do, as this can cause resentment and resistance.

Secondly, although the principal might be correct in answering questions from the teachers during a staff meeting, a meeting is not one-way traffic. S/he should ask the staff members to respond to some of the questions posed by teachers. If teachers are given the opportunity to respond to questions they will feel part of the meeting as they get the chance to contribute.

In any meeting, the principal or deputy principal, who in most cases becomes the chairperson of the meetings, should be like a neutral person and seek suggestions or proposals from other teachers. If teachers come with proposals that contradict national policies, s/he should remind teachers about that and request them to come up with the possible alternatives that will still be of benefit to the school. Principals and deputy principals should ensure that sharing of responsibilities in their schools becomes the norm. This can be done by considering the strengths of all the teachers. Also, principals, deputy principals, heads of department and teachers should collectively make decisions as they are all the members of the school. This can increase the possibility of ‘trust’ and can reduce bunking and absenteeism of staff.

While these two recommendations may seem brief, they are ‘deep’ in terms of their implementation and do; I believe, hold the key to real, enacted changes in leadership and decision making practices in schools.

6.4 Future research

Looking back at the findings of my study, the following areas are suggested for future research:

1. Investigating on a larger scale, strategies principals and deputy principals who engage in distributed leadership practices already use/adopt to develop confidence and trust amongst staff.
2. Researching contexts where staff dissatisfaction with a school’s leadership team or principal leads to staff actively undermining the ‘good of the school’, and thereby ‘taking it to the dogs’.
3. Researching the extent to which *autocratic* school leaders are able to engender levels of trust and commitment amongst staff, despite imposing significant limitations on participatory decision making processes.

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Semi-structured Interview Schedule: Principals and Deputy Principals

Key research questions:

- (i) What is the role of the principal and deputy principal in decision making processes in a school?
- (ii) To what extent do these processes facilitate the inclusion of Post Level 1 educators?

(a) Teaching, leadership and management experience, qualifications, training etc.

1. How many years did you teach as a Post Level one educator?
2. For how long have you been the Principal/Deputy Principal in this school?
3. Where did you train as an educator and when?
4. Please describe any formal training in leadership and management you have received.
5. How effective do you think it was?
6. Can you give me examples to illustrate your answer to (5)?

(b) Beliefs about decision making

1. Who should be the key decision makers in a school?
2. Can you give me examples to illustrate how this works in practice?
3. What role do you think Post Level one educators should play in decision-making processes of a school?
4. Can you give me examples to illustrate your answer to (3)?
5. Please describe a typical staff meeting for me. Who sits where? Who drafts the agenda? Who leads? Etc.
6. What role did you play in any major school success this year? What key decisions were required? Who made them?
7. Has the school had to cope with any major problems this year or last year where important decisions had to be made? How effective was the decision making process? What role did you play here?
8. What would you like to change in your school so that decision making is more effective?
9. What else would you like to say about how decisions are made in your school?

Semi-structured Interview Schedule: Post Level 1 Educators

Key research questions:

- (i) What is the role of the principal and deputy principal in decision making processes in a school?
- (ii) To what extent do these processes facilitate the inclusion of Post Level 1 educators?

(a) Teaching experience, qualifications, training etc.

1. How many years have you taught as a Post Level one educator?
2. For how long have you been an educator in this school?
3. Where did you train as an educator and when?
4. How effective do you think that training was?
5. Can you give me examples to illustrate your answer to (4)?

(b) Beliefs about decision making

1. Who should be the key decision makers in a school?
2. Can you give me an example to show how this works in practice?
3. What role do you think Post Level one educators should play in decision making processes of a school?
4. Can you give me examples to illustrate your answer to (3)?
5. Please describe a typical staff meeting for me. Who sits where? Who announces the agenda? Who leads?
6. What role did you play in any major school success this year or last year where important decisions had to be taken? Who made those decisions?
7. Has the school had to cope with any major problems this year where important decisions had to be made? How effective was the decision making process? What role did you play here?
8. What would you like to change in your school so that decision making is more effective?
9. What else would you like to say about how decisions are made in your school?

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Hloniphile Mbedla. I am doing a Master of Education degree in Education Leadership, Management and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. My student number is: 205400249 and my cell number is 0738455353.

I would like you to read this 'Informed Consent' document. It explains details about my Masters of Education research project which I would like to invite you to participate in. When you have finished reading it, if you are willing to be interviewed, please sign in the space indicated to show that you have read, understood and agreed to the terms of your participation. When you have signed, please put the letter in the addressed envelop provided. I will collect the letter from you personally.

Project title: *A qualitative inquiry into the role of the principal and deputy principal in decision making processes in three schools in the Umzimkulu district, KwaZulu-Natal.*

Project aims: The aim of this research project is to find out more about the role that the principal and deputy principal play in the school's decision making processes. I would also like to find out if the way in which the principal and deputy principal make decisions allows Post Level 1 educators to take part in that process.

Supervisor

My University supervisor is Dr Carol Thomson. Her contact details are:

Address: School of Education and Development, Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3201.

Telephone (W): +27-33-2605567; (H): +27-33-3868350 (Mobile/Cell): 0844003354

Participation Selection: Participation in this project is voluntary, thus you are free to withdraw at any time. However, I would very much like you to participate because your personal and professional experience will be very valuable to my research.

What is required of you? I would like to conduct one, or maybe two interviews with you. Each one will only last about 45 minutes. Secondly, I request to observe a staff meeting and read the minutes of staff meetings you have conducted this year. I will discuss with you a suitable time for interviews and observation.

Potential benefits to you: I hope that by talking to each other, your ideas about leading, managing and decision making will grow, and that you will feel empowered by being in this

project. Furthermore, if you are planning on studying further, this research experience may help you in the future.

Use of tape recorder: Please allow me to use a tape recorder to record your responses. There are no 'fixed' answers to any questions asked. Please bring any questions that you would like to discuss to the interviews.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Everything you have said or I have observed will be treated as confidentially as possible. In my written report I will not use the name of your school or your name or staff members' names. Instead, I will make use of pseudonyms. The data from this project will also be stored in a secure place while I am collecting it. After the submission of my dissertation, the data will be stored for a further five years. Thereafter, it will be destroyed.

The right to withdraw: You have the right to withdraw from this project at any time. The decision to withdraw from this project will not cause you any harm or disadvantage. If you decide to do so, it would help me if you could let me know as quickly and immediately, so that I do not make use of any your data and so that I can find a replacement for you as quickly as possible.

There will be refreshments for you at the end of each of my visits.

I,..... (Full names in block letters), have read, understood and agree to the terms of my participation in the project set out in this document.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Observation Schedule (for staff meetings)

1. Seating

Who sits where and why? Where do late comers sit? What arrangements are the chairs in?

2. Start of meeting

How does the meeting start? Who speaks first? What is the first thing this person says? Does everyone have an agenda? What is the atmosphere in the room? Are people comfortable? Who is in control?

3. The body of the meeting

Is the agenda followed? How are decisions made? Who is listened to? Who never speaks/ is too shy to speak? Is there 'democracy in action' or does only the Principal speak? What happens when there is disagreement? Are any items left off the agenda? Which ones? Who decides this? What decisions are made about these items? What *key* decisions were made at this meeting?

4. Closing the meeting

How does this happen? Is there a ritual that is followed? What role does the Principal play here? The Deputy Principal? The Post Level 1 educators? Who leaves the room first? Last? Is anyone asked to tidy the room? Who?

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS SCHEDULE

Title of Document	
Type	
Author	
Function/purpose	
Whose point of view?	
Who speaks in this text?	
What is their status/identity?	
On what assumptions/principles does it rest?	
How is the document related to the issues of shared decision making by the principal and deputy principal?	
What themes emerge?	