

**A TEAM-BASED APPROACH TO LEADING AND MANAGING  
A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

by

**POOVALINGUM GOVENDER**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Education (MEd) degree in the  
discipline Education Leadership, Management and Policy, School of Education and  
Development, Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**SUPERVISOR:** Dr Inba Naicker

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school. A requirement in a team-based approach to make quality decisions and improvements in the school, comes from people working in harmony. In noting that teams are more effective than individuals, this study explores how a team-based approach to leading and managing schools plays itself out in a rural primary school. The objectives of this study were to determine how a team-based approach is operationalised in a rural primary school and to determine the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach. The study employed an interpretive meta-theoretical approach with a case study research design. For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was chosen. The study was conducted in a public rural primary school in the eThekweni Region of the Ilembe District. The research participants sampled comprised two male and three female participants to accommodate gender representation. The principal, head of department (intermediate, phase), acting head of department (foundation phase), one level one educator (intermediate phase) and one level one educator (foundation phase) who were concerned with the day-to-day activity of the organisation and the delivery of its performance were selected. Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews. The collected data was analysed and categorised into common categories, patterns and themes. The key findings that emerged from the research were that to ensure achievement of school goals, teamwork is necessary. People working together, learning and sharing together will promote team effectiveness. The principal, together with the SMT play an important role in creating and managing the different types of teams. By having regular formal and informal meetings; ongoing professional development; monitoring and evaluating members of a team; having a clear vision and rationale to manage change and conflict will lead to continuous improvement and team effectiveness.

## DECLARATION

I, Poovalingum Govender, declare that

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Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre  
Westville Campus  
Private Bag x54001  
DURBAN, 4000  
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587  
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609  
[mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

21 June 2011

Mr P Govender (208524830)  
School of Education and Development  
Faculty of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Govender

**PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0368/011M**  
**PROJECT TITLE: A team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school**

In response to your application dated 15 June 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

cc. Supervisor: Dr I Naicker  
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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated firstly, to our Supreme Lord and Creator of our universe, without Whom nothing ever takes place. Secondly, my late parents: Govender Ramsamy (father) and Govender Muniamma (mother). My family: Sharmla Govender (wife), Leeshen Govender (son) and Serisha Govender (daughter) for their support and encouragement.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

SMT: School Management Team

SGB: School Governing Body

HOD: Head of Department

IQMS: Integrated Quality Management System

KZN: KwaZulu-Natal

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

TIMSS: Trends in International Maths and Science Study

ANA: Annual National Assessment

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THIS STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

There has been an increasing understanding and appreciation that the sharing of ideas and the co-operative approach found in a team-based approach, produces better results and greater productivity than the 'traditional hierarchical individualistic and competitive organisational structures' (Clarke, 2007, p. 45). Indeed, Serrat (2009) feels a team is a cooperative unit of interacting individuals who are committed to a common purpose on tasks, endowed with complementary skills for instance, in technical competence, problem-solving ability, positive attitudes and emotional intelligence. However, the synergy required in team-based approach to make quality improvements in the school comes from people working in harmony. Drawing from my experiences, a team-based approach does not happen by chance or by some unexplained miracle, but must be created and managed. A team-based approach has become desirable in schools because team work is more satisfying than working alone. Teamwork is an essential component to improve work performance and organisational effectiveness. Nakpodia (2011) contends that a team is not an ordinary group, it 'connotes more meaning' than a group because a team is built to undertake identified tasks or activities. A team is a group of people, working together on the basis of shared perception, agreed procedures, commitment, cooperation and resolving disagreements, if any, openly by discussion (Nakpodia, 2011). Team-based approach has been further articulated in the work of Lumby, Middlewood and Kaabwe (2003, p. 171), 'the concept of teamwork embodies the principles of working together, sharing and common purpose...since it is obvious way for effective management'. The authors Lumby, Middlewood and Kaabwe, (2003) are supported in this view (team-based approach) by Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) who assert that generating new ideas within teams, will substantially benefit all the members and the school as a whole.

The effectiveness of a team-based approach will depend on the attitudes of all role players in an educational institution. The attitudes of heads of department is further articulated by Bush (1994, p. 40) who asserts that effectiveness depends primarily on the attitude of heads of institutions who have to cede power in order to ‘liberate the creative talents of their colleagues’. Sergiovanni (1984) contends that leadership burdens and pains will be less if leadership functions and roles are shared. According to Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) a team-based approach has become a priority for the educational manager, a shift away from an autocratic leadership style to a more democratic style of management. Hence, through teams, educators can become part of the decision-making process and procedures. In addition, Bush and Middlewood (2005) indicate that a team-based approach can produce advantages in schools, for example, by raising educator morale and contributing to organisational learning.

By having the right mix of people in a team-based approach, the team will produce a diversity of approaches to build further successes. Team members with mutual respect, trust and maturity can create a strong foundation for teamwork and problem solving. Nakpodia (2011) asserts that the key to team-based approach is that members are mutually dependent on each other, primarily to share and exchange information, best practices or perspectives in order to make calculated decisions to help each individual perform in a team within an educational institution.

A team-based approach has emerged as one of the ‘must haves’ in most educational institutions today (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005). The emerging importance and focus of a team-based approach is driven by a desire to develop ‘collaborative methods of work performance’, with a strong focus towards enhancing productivity and staff engagement (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005). In noting that teams are more effective than individuals, the problem to be studied is to see how a team-based approach to leading and managing schools plays itself out in a rural primary school context. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school.

## **1.2 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

School leadership and management in South Africa has undergone significant change in the post-apartheid era. Changes in legislation, availability of resources,

demographics, development of new technology, new funding arrangements, new labour relations and the introduction of a new outcomes-based curriculum are some of the significant happenings in education. As a result of changes in terms of democratisation of education, managers of schools are increasingly being held accountable for schools' performance. Hence, a growing concern is the persistent poor performance of South African students not only on national tests (Christie, 2008) but also on international tests such as Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) where South Africa has twice come last out of all the African countries that participated (Scott, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Rooyen (2009) noted that the majority (70-80%) of primary school children from rural disadvantaged schools, 'are completing their primary education without being able to read fluently in the school's instructional language. In addition, Bush *et al* (2009) reported that in South African schools, there is very limited research and literature on managing and leading, teaching and learning and that there are schools that are 'unable or unwilling to promote team-work within their learning areas'. Being a Deputy Principal of a primary school, on a daily basis, I am exposed to challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach to leading and managing. Hence, my motivation in conducting this study has been prompted by the insight I have gained from the literature that I engaged with the module, Management of Human Resources in Education.

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Currently in education there is a move towards distributed leadership in schools. An integral component of distributed leadership is leading and managing through teams. In the South African context, given the autocratic past that we come from in education, distributed leadership is encouraged. There have been very few studies conducted in leading and managing through teams (Bush *et al*, 2009). Further, from my literature search, I noted that very few studies were undertaken in a rural context, internationally. However, limited study was done in South Africa, hence, this study will make a contribution towards understanding, leading and managing through teams in a rural context.

## **1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to explore a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To determine how a team-based approach is operationalised in a rural school?
- To determine the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach?

## **1.5 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Collectively, this study seeks to answer the following key questions:

- How is a team-based approach operationalised in a rural school?
- What are the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach?

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

To ensure a uniform understanding of concepts and terms in this study, the following will be defined: team, leadership, management and teamwork.

### **1.6.1 Team**

Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 112) define team as ‘a group of people with common objectives which can effectively tackle any task it is given’. Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 108) feel that ‘teams abound in schools because they are structured in ways that allow teachers to work together to make curriculum and management related decisions’. According to Serrat (2009) people try to accomplish with others what they cannot do alone. I define team as a quality group that has been created, managed and used as a vehicle for organising work.

### **1.6.2 Leadership**

According to Clarke (2007, p. 2) leadership is about ‘having a clear vision of what you want for your school...because it creates direction and purpose’. Therefore, leadership is about influencing others to achieve desirable goals. According to Bush (2003, p. 51), ‘leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organised group towards goal-setting and goal achievement.’ In addition, leadership has been defined in terms of traits, influence, relationships and occupation of an administrative



position (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson & Jinks, 2007). According to Howlett (2007) leadership is needed to inspire and engage people's energies in order to keep moving forward.

### **1.6.3 Management**

According to Clarke (2007, p. 1) management is about efficiency and effectiveness. Managing is about maintaining organisational arrangements efficiently and effectively. In addition, management can be defined as a process of striving towards the goal of effective teaching and learning. The main purpose of management is to support, improve and enhance teaching and learning. According to Glatter (1979, p. 16) management is concerned with 'the internal operation of educational institutions, and also with their relationships with their environment, that is, the communities in which they are set, and with the governing bodies to which they are formally responsible.' Therefore, leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools are to achieve their objectives.

### **1.6.4 Teamwork**

According to Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 113) 'teamwork can enhance quality management in schools as teams can utilise resources more effectively, increase organisational effectiveness, improve the quality of educational programmes and create better learning and working environments'. Lumby, Middlewood and Kaabwe (2003) refer to teamwork as a concept that embodies the principles of working together towards a common vision. Teamwork has been further articulated by Asong (2005, p. 1) who views teamwork as 'denoting the ways in which team members cooperate, interact and depend on each other in the pursuance of their collective goals'.

## **1.7 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The purpose of the literature review in my study was to present issues in the literature relating to a team-based approach to management. To this end, the researcher engaged in a comprehensive search of various national and international databases on current and completed research. The majority of the books and journal articles consulted were obtained from the library at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This study is located within an interpretive research paradigm and employs a qualitative research approach. More specifically this study draws on a case study research design.

One rural primary school was purposively selected in the eThekweni Region of the Ilembe District of KwaZulu-Natal. The principal, head of department (intermediate phase), head of department (foundation phase), one level one educator (intermediate phase) and one level one educator (foundation phase) who are concerned with the day-to-day activities of the organisation and the delivery of its performance, were purposively selected as research participants.

## **1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This research study is divided into five chapters.

**Chapter One** provides a general background and overview of the key aspects of this study. The study is introduced by pointing out that teamwork improves teaching quality, innovation and school effectiveness. The rationale and motivation for this study and the significance of pursuing this study are presented. The aims and objectives and the key research questions that inform this study are listed, followed by the definition of key terms used in this study. A brief outline of the methodology employed in this study brings this chapter to conclusion.

**Chapter Two** focuses on the literature reviewed with regard to the key research questions. The review commences with the theoretical framework of this study. Thereafter, the review focuses on: the types, purpose and characteristics of effective teams; the phases of team development, the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach; the composition, developing and motivating effective teams; key factors in successful team functioning and styles of conflict management. The chapter closes with a discussion on monitoring team performance.

**Chapter Three** focuses on the research design and methodology of this study. The research paradigm employed in this study is furnished. This is followed by a discussion on the methodological approach of this study. An account on the data

collection methods, sampling, data analysis techniques, ethical issues, trustworthiness and limitations of this study is then presented.

**Chapter Four** focuses on the analysis, findings and discussion of the data. The data is presented using themes and sub-themes generated from the semi-structured interviews. The emerging patterns from the data are discussed. *Verbatim* quotations are used in order to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost.

**Chapter Five** presents the conclusions of the research. Thereafter, some recommendations are presented.

## **1.10 SUMMARY**

This chapter has outlined a general background and orientation to this study. The rationale and motivation for the study and the significance of the study, was presented. The key research questions, definition of terms as well as the research design and methodology were outlined. This chapter then concluded with an overview of the chapters of this research report.

The next chapter outlines the literature reviewed with regard to this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter outlined the background and orientation to this study. This chapter focuses on the literature reviewed with regard to the key research questions formulated in chapter one.

This review commences with the theoretical underpinnings of this study. It draws on the theories of distributed leadership and collegial management theories. Thereafter, this chapter provides a review of some of the literature found to be relevant to this study. It focuses on key issues namely, the types, purpose and characteristics of effective teams; the phases of team development, the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach; the composition, development and motivation of teams; key factors in successful team functioning and conflict management within teams. The chapter closes with a discussion on monitoring team performance.

#### **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Henning (2004, p. 25) a theoretical framework positions one's research in the discipline or subject in which the researcher is working. The discipline in which I am located is educational leadership and management. Therefore, the two theories that underpin my study are distributed leadership theory and collegial theories of management.

##### **2.2.1 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP**

There have been various attempts at clearly defining distributed leadership. According to Harris (2004, p. 14) distributed leadership is defined as, 'a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working together'. The human ability within an institution is maximised when various ideas diverge from one another. However, there are various terminologies related to distributed leadership (Oduro, 2004). For example, dispersed, collaborative, democratic and shared distributed leadership. In some cases these terms are used 'interchangeably' with

distributed leadership, which is one and the same thing (Oduro, 2004, p. 4). Coles and Southworth (2005, p. 37) view distributed leadership as a shared and collective endeavour that engages and involves 'multiple individuals' in which people work and learn together to achieve desired goals of the institution. Along the same lines Mayrowetz (2008, p. 431) contends that by having several people involved in leadership, it will lead to 'collective capacity building' which eventually will lead to organisational and instructional improvement. In addition, Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 107) assert that the task of transforming educational institutions 'single-handedly' is too complex, therefore, to improve curriculum and management related decisions, distributed leadership is encouraged. Furthermore, Naidoo (2008) contends that in distributed leadership the redistribution of power and realignment of authority within an educational institution, creates a strong web of relationships between educators, parents, learners, administrators and community leaders. Thus, this representational power, when shared by many people, improves the quality of teaching and learning and will strengthen the whole school community. Shared responsibility makes the workload more manageable, when each individual has the opportunity to contribute in ways that will enhance teaching and learning.

Spillane and Healey (2010) contend that a distributed perspective, within a conceptual framework, has the potential to generate new knowledge about school leadership and management. A distributed perspective allows for individuals without any formal leadership designation to take responsibility for the work of leading and managing schools (Spillane & Healey, 2010). Spillane and Healey (2010) are supported in this view by Harris (2004, p. 13) who asserts that distributed leadership should concentrate on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the institution, 'rather than seeking this only through formal position or role'. In addition, Hulpia, Devos and Rosseel (2009) explain that in distributed leadership, various leadership roles and functions are distributed to several leaders because heads of schools (especially in large schools where the volume of work is demanding) can no longer develop and provide leadership through daily interactions with all school members. These leaders can have formal or informal leadership positions.

Distributed leadership is characterised as a form of collective leadership. Every educator (even at entry level) acts as a leader and develops expertise by working

together. Mabuku (2009) asserts that by recognising the capabilities of every educator of the educational institution to participate, implies that the leader trusts his or her followers and would therefore be comfortable to share power, responsibilities and accountability with the rest of them. Furthermore, Harris (2004, p. 14) is of the view that by engaging many people in leadership activity, is the 'core of distributed leadership in action'. By engaging a network of individuals in which members pool their expertise, the human capacity within an educational institution will be maximised.

Leadership should not be concentrated in the hands of a sole individual but should be shared and 'stretched over' a number of people in an organization or team (Hoadley, Christie, Jacklin & Ward, 2007). Commenting on the impact of shared and 'stretched over' leadership, Coles and Southworth (2005, p. 39) make the point that studying leadership as a distributive practice involves, 'unpacking the idea of distribution and of exploring relations among the practices of multiple leaders'. In addition, Coles and Southworth (2005, p. 37) contend that leadership in schools should involve practices that are 'stretched over leaders'. According to Coles and Southworth (2005, p. 38) there are three leadership practices that are 'stretched over'. Firstly, activities are 'reciprocal', where each activity requires inputs from the other. For example when, two or more leaders in a literacy committee team depend on the interplay between multiple leaders. The reciprocal interdependencies allow leaders to play off one another when each leader brings different resources, skills and knowledge to improve literacy practices. Thus, individuals in a team who work collaboratively to play off one another, with the practice of person 'A' enabling the practice of person 'B' and *vice-versa* will enable improvement in literacy practices. Secondly, where the activities produce common resources when 'pooled' but are otherwise independent. For example: when the SMT adopt a motion to work together to evaluate classroom teaching. The deputy principal engages in formative evaluation by visiting educators in the classroom and providing regular feedback on what he/she observed. In contrast, the principal engages in summative evaluation either once or twice a year to assess instructional practices. Through formal and informal visits (pooled) by the principal and deputy principal respectively, a more comprehensive evaluation of teaching practices is established. Thirdly, activities of an organisation are 'sequential'. That is some activities are dependent on the completion of others before beginning.

For example: the Annual National Assessment (ANA) task, from the Department of Education is arranged sequentially by the SMT. First, the test (ANA) that is administered to learners requires scheduling and coordination. Second, the test results must be received, analysed and interpreted by the SMT. Third, from the analysis, instructional priorities are identified and disseminated to members of the staff which are implemented and monitored. Hence, the different distributed leadership tasks: administering the test, interpreting learners' test data through test scores, establishing instructional improvement, identifying instructional strategies to address deficiencies and creating sessions for professional development are stretched sequentially over multiple leaders to enhance instructional improvement. Furthermore, Mayrowetz (2008, p. 426) supports distributed leadership and explains that activities that are distributed or 'stretched over multiple people, and the tools that are used will be useful to understand the practice of leadership in schools.'

Researchers posit that distributed leadership can lead to improved effectiveness. According to Mayrowetz (2008) sharing administrative workload with others will make the job of the principal doable. Hence, distributed leadership can be used as a 'vehicle' to match subordinates with tasks they could perform well (Mayrowetz, 2008). For example, by creating new positions (grade coordinators) that will lead to instructional improvement. Harris (2005, p. 1) feels that by harnessing and enhancing the skills and knowledge of people within an institution, it will create a common culture that will function 'positively and effectively' hence schools will cope with the complex challenges.

Interest in the notion of distributed leadership is growing in popularity (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Commenting on the growing popularity, Mayrowetz (2008, p. 424) make the point that distributed leadership is now widely used among scholars and practitioners in the field of educational leadership. This growing popularity of distributed leadership recognises multiple leaders from a distributed perspective. The key focus on multiple leaders is the interactions, rather than the actions of those in formal and informal leadership roles (Harris & Spillane, 2008). However, the primary concern is how leadership influences organisational and instructional improvement.

In distributed leadership there are three main reasons for the growing popularity (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Firstly, due to the increased pressure to change current leadership practices in schools, distributed leadership has normative power. Due to cascading leadership, where everyone is a leader, 'schools have resulted in the expansion of leadership tasks and responsibilities' (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p. 31). Therefore, leadership is purposefully distributed within the school to seek school improvement. Furthermore, according to Harris (2004), a single leader is at last being replaced with leadership that is focused upon teams (distributed leadership) rather than individuals. Secondly, as a result of the increased external demands and pressures on schools, distributed leadership also has representational power. Harris and Spillane (2008, p. 31) explain that many schools have restructured their leadership teams and created new roles to meet the current needs of the workforce. Hence, distributed leadership practices are becoming more prevalent as schools engage with collaborative arrangements to share ideas and insights. Sharing of ideas and insights, coupled with 'diverse types of expertise' is one of the important ingredients that are required to meet changing challenges and new demands (Harris & Spillane 2008, p. 31). Commenting further on the impact of changing challenges and new demands, Harris and Spillane (2008, p. 31) make the point that there is a growing recognition that the 'old organisational structures of schooling simply do not fit the requirements of learning in the twenty-first century'. Furthermore, Harris and Spillane (2008, p. 31) indicate that new leadership approaches are needed to 'traverse (to pass over) a very different organisational landscape'. Thirdly, distributed leadership has empirical power which makes a positive difference to organisational outcomes and learning by students. Harris and Spillane (2008) contend that the patterns of leadership distribution within an organisation do matter and therefore, organisational performance and outcomes will improve if distributed leadership is stretched over and taken seriously.

In the South African context, a new policy framework for shared leadership is enshrined in the *South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996*. This *Act* distributes leadership to various levels at educational institutions. Leadership is even distributed to the lowest level at high schools through democratically elected representative council of learners (RCL's) (Clarke, 2007). In addition, the rapid escalating responsibilities of principals' in terms of increased workloads; increasing complexity of school contexts;



the expansion of the role of the principal towards more decentralised systems (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011); facilitating the appraisal process (Mpungose, 2010); co-operating with school governing body processes (in terms of the *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996*) and coping with ‘multicultural school populations’ (Mestry & Singh, 2007, p. 479) are some of the demands of principalship in this new millennium. Consequently, distributed leadership is encouraged. Commenting on the impact of distributed leadership, Lashway (2003, p. 3) makes the point that, ‘since essential knowledge is distributed across many individuals, it makes sense for leadership to be distributed as well’. For schools to be successful, leadership needs to be distributed across the school. Spillane (2005, p. 143) explains that school principals or any other leader for that matter, ‘do not single-handedly lead schools to greatness’ and that leadership involves an ‘array of individuals with various tools and structures’. Therefore, one way of accomplishing this is by leading and managing through the team-based approach. The team-based approach has been articulated in the work of McNulty and Bailey (2004, p. 27) who assert that in a team, ‘multiple people work together to complete the right work regardless of positional authority...the group capitalises on individual strengths to create a common approach to improvement’.

### **2.2.2 COLLEGIAL THEORIES OF MANAGEMENT**

Linked to distributed leadership is the notion of collegiality. Collegiality can broadly be defined as educators conferring and collaborating with other educators and that something is gained when educators work together as a team. According to Thurlow (2003), collegiality (working together) has three main advantages: Firstly, there is sufficient evidence to prove that educators wish to participate more fully in the management of their schools. Secondly, by allowing educators to participate in the decision making process, the quality is likely to be better. Thirdly, if educators are involved in their own outcomes, effective implementation of decisions is much more likely to be achieved. Thurlow (2003, p. 55) indicates that ‘collective responsibility for decision making would make teachers keener to see that decisions are carried out’. Bush (1994, p. 39) describes collegiality as highly normative, idealistic and attractive because they encourage the participation of educators in decision making, ‘leading to a sense of ownership and an enhanced prospect of successful innovation’. Therefore, the participation and effectiveness of a collegial system depends on the attitudes of staff. If educators support participation, then collegiality will succeed, and if

educators display hostility or apathy, it seems certain to fail. Furthermore, through participation collegial processes can be workable if all the individuals in an educational institution contribute at an acceptable level. However, a major implication for leading and managing through teams is that, an adjustment of settlement may be compromised if majority of the educators choose not to participate. Thurlow (2003) claims that if educators are not interested in participating in management issues, particularly when it involves extra meetings; then the educators simply like to do their work and leave immediately after school. In addition, the collegial process in schools depends more on the attitudes of heads of institutions than on the support of educators. Decision making may be difficult to sustain because heads of institutions remain accountable to external bodies and thus are reluctant to share power with their staff (teams) (Thurlow, 2003). For example, principals find it problematic to defend policies that have emerged from collegial process, especially if it does not enjoy their personal support (Thurlow, 2003). Principals may express concerns that collegiality may decentralise authority in the school, because traditionally school principals have regarded the school as theirs (Hargreaves, 1992). Principals experience a feeling of losing control and may be threatened by educators becoming empowered, because they may feel that their own powers will be reduced. According to Thurlow (2003) principals who like to be autocratic and dictatorial will not like the empowerment of educators because such principals might not wish to share their power with educators.

Leading and managing schools through the team-based approach; results in power sharing among groups and individuals. Bush (1995, p. 52) is of the view that 'collegial models assume that organisations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion, leading to consensus...power is shared among some or all members of the organisation who are thought to have a mutual understanding about the objectives of the institution'. Singh, Manser and Mestry (2007) contend that collegial management should be viewed as a process that encourages, motivates and accommodates shared decision-making and shared leadership in the spirit of enabling people to want to act. The best decisions are taken by utilising the skills and knowledge of educators at educational institutions. Since it is shared or collaborative decision-making, educators see to it that it is implemented. The result of the implementation of shared decision-making has been that heads of institution in such

schools encounter new decision-makers, new values, new managerial decisions and managerial responsibilities. Commenting on the impact of shared- decision making, Hargreaves (1992, p. 80) makes the point that ‘collegiality is seen as forming a vital bridge between school improvement and teacher development’. School improvement, curriculum reform, educator development, leadership development are all dependent on the positive building of collegial relationships for their success (Hargreaves, 1992). Failure to develop and sustain, for example, school-based curriculum development initiatives collectively, will result in failure to build collegial working relationships. Hargreaves (1992) argues that joint curriculum planning will improve morale and teacher satisfaction; hence, teachers will benefit from their experiences and continue to develop and grow. Mutual learning and discussion of classroom practice, for example, sharing of lesson plans around themes will create a comfort level in a shared classroom because the classroom is no longer ‘my teaching arena...but ours’ (Jedele, 2010, p. 108).

The head of the institution (principal) does not regard himself/herself as a symbol of authority. The principal does not have the traditional last word, but becomes the coordinator of a variety of people. Power is shared among all role players of the educational institution who have a shared understanding about the aims of the institution. Shared decisions are likely to be better informed and are also much more likely to be implemented effectively to bring about school improvement. Therefore, members of a team must be aware of one another’s strengths to capitalise on them. By being willing to learn from one another, trusting one another, treating one another with respect, equally and fairly will certainly promote collegiality (Oqunsola, Aboyade, Jagbora & Igbeneghu, 2009). Singh (2005, p. 13) explains for collegiality to be effective, the processes of ‘shared leadership’ need to prevail. Hargreaves (1992, p. 80) feels that ‘collegiality is rapidly becoming one of the new orthodoxies of educational change and school improvement’. Hargreaves (1992, p. 80) goes further in referring to the importance of shared vision as a basis for collegial decision-making and educator development, ‘collegiality among teachers and between teachers and their principals has been advanced as one of the most fruitful strategies for fostering teacher development’. The implication of collegiality among teachers and between teachers and their principals is that in a collegial climate all educators who demonstrate power through expertise are given the same opportunities and

management rights as those placed in higher positions of hierarchical power (Singh, Manser & Mestry, 2007). Based on professional work ethics and collegial principles, team members as decision-makers need to feel comfortable and unafraid to take collective decisions.

The practice of collegiality at educational institutions, are attractive because decisions are reached by a process of discussion and consensus. Collegiality advocates educator participation in decision making. Discussions are open and without hidden motives. The educators feel free to make suggestions, raise ideas, provide information and deliver constructive criticism in a relaxed and supportive climate with a view to resolve issues, if there are any, by agreement. Reaching decisions through consensus in teams will result in improved relationships, happier employees, better team work, high levels of achievement and ultimately job satisfaction (Singh, Manser, & Mestry, 2007). However, Bush (1994) asserts that collegial approaches to decision-making tend to be slow and at times cumbersome. In addition, Bush (1994) explains that collegial approaches require patience and a considerable investment of time. For example, when policy proposals require the approval of the various committees, the process is often tedious and time consuming. Educators may have to endure many prolonged meetings before critical and sensitive issues are resolved. Enduring prolonged meetings has been further articulated by Thurlow (2003) who explains that due to the democratic culture within teams, sometimes a process takes several months to reach consensus. Consensus is prolonged because of the extent of consultation and participation with various stakeholders, such as learners, staff and parents (Thurlow, 2003).

When individuals cannot be empowered further, collective responsibility can be given to a team. Empowerment of a team, however, must happen gradually as the team develops to accept increasing responsibility, become more self-directed and take ownership of the product or service they are delivering. Commenting on the impact of collective responsibility, Hargreaves (1992) makes the point that members of a team must learn to work together in collaborative groups (teams). When these teams support collaborative practices, collegiality can grow. In addition, members of a team must be given sufficient time to engage in joint tasks.

The efficiency and effectiveness of an educational institution depends on the quality of the people in the institution. The practice of collegiality at an educational institution is that every member of the team should clearly understand that roles within the team are complementary (due to team efficiency) and not competitive (Nakpodia, 2011). Members of a team are valued when there is synchronisation between all team members to get the job done. Teaming (practice of collegiality) gives members the opportunity to keep up with the demands of daily routine, hence well informed decisions (collectively) are taken based on the goal of the educational institution. Due to a more educated and sophisticated workforce, teaming is an appropriate way to seek more inputs and more involvement of members for problem solving in our changing environment (Nakpodia, 2011).

### **2.3 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This section reviews the literature with regard to teams. It brings together a review of the types, purpose and characteristics of teams. In addition, the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach; the composition, developing and motivating effective teams; the key factors in successful team functioning; styles of conflict management and monitoring team performance are reviewed respectively.

#### **2.3.1 TYPES OF TEAMS IN SCHOOLS**

A team is a group of three or more people pursuing a specific set of goals within the context of a formalised set of structures (Middlewood & Lumby, 1998). Middlewood and Lumby (1998) describe broadly three types of teams in schools, namely, the statutory teams, the standing teams and project or task teams. Statutory teams are teams whose composition, functions and duties are set out in the appropriate government legislation. For example: the ‘*South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* and or in provincial acts, policies and regulations’ (Clarke, 2007, p. 48). Standing teams (non-statutory), are teams who are concerned with the day-to-day activity of the organisation and therefore the delivery of its performance. The establishment of ‘standing teams’ rests with the school governing body and school management team (Clarke, 2007, p. 48). For example, good teaching is the core function of any school, therefore, subject teams are the ‘ideal vehicle for promoting and monitoring good teaching’ (Clarke, 2007, p. 54). Project or task teams are teams which are established on an *ad-hoc* basis to achieve short term goals and are disbanded when the tasks are

accomplished. According to Clarke (2007, p. 59) before establishing a task team, there must be complete clarity about five things. Firstly, the purpose for which the team is established and it needs to be specific. For example, according to Clarke (2007, p. 59):

‘the purpose of the task team is to investigate the legality and viability of the use of random drug-testing as a deterrent to the use and abuse of illicit substance abuse by learners, and to make a recommendation to the school governing body about the legality, viability, advantages and disadvantages of random drug-testing’.

Secondly, under whose authority the members of a team are working, and there needs to be absolute clarity to when they are answerable. For example, according to Clarke (2007, p. 59) ‘the task team will work under the authority of the school governing body, as represented by its chairperson, and is to report on its findings to the school governing body’. Thirdly, the scope and limits of their work; such as whether it is going to be detailed substantiated research or simply just to gauge the level of interest. Fourthly, operational ground rules for example, how will they be selected and what authority will they have to question learners, parents, staff and members of the public. Finally, time frames and deadlines for interim and final reports must be clearly indicated.

### **2.3.2 THE PURPOSE OF TEAMS**

One of the main purposes of teams is that people try to accomplish with others what they cannot do alone (Serrat, 2009). The purpose of teams is also supported by Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 108), when they assert that, ‘teams abound in schools because they are structured in ways that allow teachers to work together to make curriculum and management related decisions’. Clarke (2007, p. 45) asserts that ‘effective teams are not only more productive work units than individuals; they also contribute more to the organisation’s overall effectiveness’. The purpose of teams has been further articulated in the work of Handy (1993). According to Handy (1993, p. 25) ‘the purpose of teams is to improve communication between people, offering them more chances of a creative solution to problems, because they bring together a range of talents and abilities’.

### **2.3.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS**

Openness and candour is an important characteristic of teams. Team discussions must be open, and without hidden motives. Team members are encouraged to be open and honest with one another in the expression of disagreement and of emotion. Being open and honest has been further articulated in the work of Steyn and van Niekerk (2007). According to them, there should be no hidden agendas and there should be honest communication between all team members. Criticism should be focused towards the problem and not at a member of a team, with the solution of the problem as the ultimate goal.

Team decisions are expressed in terms of action. The members of an effective team know what the plan of action is and by whom it will be executed. The emphasis on action has been further articulated by Sugai and Horner (2006). According to them, a team-based approach is essential to increasing visibility, sustaining and implementation, controlling expansion and maximising outcomes.

Situational leadership in teams is determined by the situation. The leadership is based on the ability to lead the team through a specific issue or activity. The situational leader (for example the principal) should be prepared to stand back as leader when the situation requires another member of the team to take charge. For example, in the School Management Team (SMT) of a school, the senior primary head of department (HOD) ought to take the lead role in matters related to his/her phase. Where HOD's share their ideas, develop school policies and enact consistent practice through the school, school management teams operate successfully (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Rooyen, 2009). HOD's should therefore be allowed to lead and be supported by the team. In addition, a study conducted by Mestry and Singh (2007, p. 482) the authors found that the establishment of SMT's represent a shift away from an 'authoritarian structure of school management that characterised apartheid education'. Hence, the SMT's should be more coaching, advisory and developmental than instructional. Furthermore, according to Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 112) recently, however, there has been a move away from 'authoritarian models of decision making towards more collegial views on the role relations between school principals and staff'.

A team cannot function effectively without a set of distinct values, which should be accepted by all those involved and regarded as a mission. Members of a team should share similar values, such as commitment, integrity and mutual support. As members of a team share ideas and information, they become more effective, efficient, and professional and the quality of their work is enhanced (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007). Explicit and shared values have been further articulated in the work of Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 113), 'in successful schools the school community share values and goals'; hence, there are direct benefits for educators in working together in teams.

By utilising the knowledge and skills of all team members, the best decisions are made. Quality decisions and knowledge emerge in the minimum time, but to the maximum effect to enhance performance. In a study conducted by Naidoo (2008, p. 41) she found that 'opportunities to collaborate and build knowledge can enhance job satisfaction and performance'. Commenting on the impact of maintaining a collaborative culture, Singh and Lokotsch (2005, p. 285) make the point that by getting staff members involved in 'collaborative goal setting and reducing teacher isolation will foster and develop participatory skills'. In addition, in a study conducted by Singh (2005, p. 17) he found that 'role isolation consequently dwindles when the principal and his/her staff work together in managing the resources of the school'. Furthermore, the findings of the study by Singh, Manser, and Mestry (2007, p. 542), suggest that the role of the principal is vital in creating 'a collaborative educational environment in which collegiality would flourish'.

In a team-based approach, the pattern of communication in organisations is, 'indirect, non-assertive and non-confrontational' (Aycaan, 2011, p. 2). Communication, with the sole purpose of enrichment, can take place between team members without the permission of the leader. Hence, through the process of lateral communication knowledge is gained by team members which benefits the team as a whole. Law, Sandness, Hua-Li Jian and Yo-Ping Huang (2009, p. 2) explains that knowledge gained by teams has been 'associated with realisable benefits in the form of improved performance'. According to Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) good communication is essential for 'effective teamwork', without it, people can become demotivated. In addition, Rico, Sanchez-Manzanares, Gil and Gibson (2008, p. 172) contend that communication helps team members acquire a wide base of common information



about each other and therefore will 'exhibit an open exchange of information' and thus engage in conversations relevant to work.

Pride in the team refers to the commitment, dedication and involvement of team members and can be seen in high morale and loyalty. Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 120) explain that teamwork can produce advantages in schools, for example in 'raising teacher morale and contributing to organisational learning'. Team members believe in themselves and there is mutual respect and trust between the team members. Having trust in a team has been further articulated in the work of Rico *et al* (2008, p. 172) 'teams with high levels of trust exhibit an open exchange of information and engage in conversations about relevant work and personal issues'. Trust is important for collective tasks that require high levels of interpersonal risk, mutual dependence and continuous adaptation of team members' actions and knowledge (Rico *et al*, 2008). Furthermore, Rico *et al* (2008) assert that trust plays an important role in teams when talking about errors, experimenting, asking for help and sharing concerns.

#### **2.3.4 PHASES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT**

Effective teams do not happen by chance. According to Lumby, Middlewood and Kaabwe (2003, p. 171) teams need to be developed and they need time to 'consciously foster and develop a teamwork approach in order to facilitate school improvement'. A team goes through four phases of development to reach effectiveness, namely forming, storming, norming and performing (Bush & Middlewood, 1997; Lumby, Middlewood & Kaabwe, 2003; Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007). In the forming stage of team building people are getting acquainted with one another. The team is unsure about what it is supposed to do and members become familiar with the way other members function. Anxiety, uncertainty, domination and ambiguity are experienced by members. In the storming stage, conflict between groups, resistance to the leaders, opinions polarised and individual initiatives are at stake. Members begin to find their place as team members, challenge the tasks of the team and how these will be carried out. Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 119) explain that in the storming phase the 'central issue is power, competition develops and the ensuing conflict makes the stage uncomfortable'. In the norming phase, team members identify each other's strengths and weaknesses. Team members begin to use

their past experiences to solve their problems and pull together as a 'cohesive group' (Salas, 2007). Mutual support and a sense of team identity take place. Finally, in the performing stage high levels of trust and inter-dependence are reached. A deep level of comradeship, trust and procedures is adapted to suit different needs (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007). The team has achieved harmony, members have learned how to work together and manage conflict. Squelch and Lemmer (1994, p. 77) indicate the focus is on being 'supportive, creative innovative and effective'. In addition, solutions to problems emerge, more output in less time, the quality of outcomes improves and decisions are translated into action.

### **2.3.5 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH A TEAM-BASED APPROACH**

There are five fundamental challenges associated with this approach. Firstly, Bush and Middlewood (1997) explain that teams made up solely of high achievers are unlikely to work productively together. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that a more considered 'mix of team' roles is necessary. However, Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 118) argue that 'effective teams do not happen by chance...they have to be deliberately created and systematically managed'. Hence, it is important to find the right mix of roles for successful team functioning. Secondly, interpersonal conflict was cited as a reason for conflict between those who wanted to work collaboratively (Bush & Middlewood, 2005). Behfar, Kern and Brett (2006) indicate conflicts are usually expressed verbally with condescending tone of voice, sarcasm, aggressive or bullying delivery. Hence it was reported that these were causing problems for the team in getting the work done. Squelch and Lemmer (1994) argue that a winning team is developed in stages (forming, storming, norming and performing), over a period of time and therefore team members and leaders must work tirelessly to maintain the team. Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) explain that a team that has selected the right people in the right roles will not necessarily achieve instant success. This is because all teams go through a process of team building (stages of development). Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) further reports that if a team is not performing well, the team should not be changed or dissolved simply for that reason, as it may be in a 'negative temporary phase' of its functioning. Therefore, the team may need more time for team building. Thirdly, Bush and Middlewood (2005) report that work intensification where a minority of educators indicated that team work has not reduced their workload and it was a burden attending team meetings. Further, Bush

and Middlewood (2005) cite a fundamental limitation (challenge does not involve teamwork) that teachers spend most of their working day physically isolated from their colleagues because teaching is 'overwhelming an individual activity'. I, take a position by strongly disagreeing with Bush and Middlewood (2005) because the best decisions are taken (to reduce work load and time) by utilising the skills and knowledge of educators in a team at an educational institution. Since it is shared or collaborative decision-making, educators see to it, that it is implemented. The result of the implementation of shared decision-making has been that heads of institutions in such schools encounter new decision-makers, new values, new managerial decisions and managerial responsibilities. Fourthly, Bush and Middlewood (2005) are of the opinion that teachers' value authority and the ability to exert control; hence, mandated team approaches do not produce teacher collaboration. However, collegial models assume that educators need to cooperate with one another to ensure a logically consistent approach to teaching and learning and also have a right to share in the wider decision making process. Leadership functions and roles shared will reduce the burdens of leadership. Earley (2004, p. 180) claims that 'leaders in learning communities promote a strong sense of shared vision for the future, they lead the learning, by being seen to be learning with everyone else; they share and distribute leadership and empower others; and continuous improvement is built into the fabric of the organisation'. Finally, Thurlow (2003, p. 56) explains that 'a fundamental assumption of collegial models is that decisions are made by consensus' it is expected that the outcome of the discussions should be an agreement based on the shared values of the educators. However, in practice, though, educators have their viewpoints and may represent educators within the school. These unavoidable interests at times have a tremendous influence on teams, processes and procedures. This view is shared by Thurlow (2003, p. 56) 'the participatory framework may become the focal point for disagreement'. However, collegial processes can be workable if all the individuals in an educational institution contribute positively.

Lumby, Middlewood and Kaabwe (2003) contend that operating through teams is not a 'panacea' for all school related problems. The assumption that teams are better than individuals is challenged due to certain barriers (for example, demands for openness and sharing) to effective teamwork. They are supported in this view by Steyn and van

Niekerk (2007, p. 121) who suggest that some of the main barriers to effective teamwork are:

- Lack of information to make informed decisions
- Lack of individual commitment
- Personal issues, for example undisclosed concerns and aims
- Unclear objectives
- Lack of participation by members
- Lack of success
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of interaction between members
- Lack of experience
- Lack of interest
- Lack of resources
- Lack of integration
- Poor listening skills

### **2.3.6 POSSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH A TEAM-BASED APPROACH IN MANAGING THROUGH TEAMS**

Quality management in educational institutions can be enhanced through team work by utilising resources more effectively, increasing organisational effectiveness, improving the quality of educational programs and creating suitable learning and working environments (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007). Enhanced quality management through team work will increase productivity, improve morale and motivation, new ideas are generated and will enhance job satisfaction. Hence, teamwork benefits learners, educators and parents and will help to build a professional culture in schools.

Working with teams has benefits for the individual and the school as a whole. Squelch and Lemmer (1994) indicate that people want the team to do well and be successful so that they are motivated to work together instead of competing individually. In addition, resources, special talents and strengths are shared instead of hoarded. Furthermore, better quality decisions are made when people work and have regular meetings together in teams; hence, in this way decisions are not imposed upon

people. By having regular team meetings, the possibility of teams doing most of their work is enhanced and completed. Therefore, meetings must be held at regular intervals and must be run as effectively as possible.

Managing through teams, equates itself with collegial approaches to decision making, which leads to a sense of ownership and has been recommended as appropriate ways of managing the work of professional staff in educational institutions. In addition, development planning is one important process that is more likely to work well if it is handled by collegial teams in view of the fact that one of the main features of collegiality is its emphasis on teamwork. Due to teams encouraging educator involvement in decision making and leading to a sense of ownership, collegial support within teams is perceived to have improved educator morale and reduced absenteeism and stress (Bush & Middlewood, 2005).

The emphasis is on continued collegiality to create opportunities to develop and apply new knowledge and skills, to formulate new goals and aims for realisation of the vision, continuous development of people in a team and to adjust to changing circumstances. This view is shared by Hargreaves (1992, p. 81), 'school improvement, curriculum development, and leadership development are all seen as being dependent, to some extent, on the building of positive collegial relationships for their success'. Hence, collective responsibility (managing through teams) for decision making would make educators keener to see that decisions are carried out. Quality of decision making is better when educators participate in teams because principals cannot monopolise or highjack any process. The involvement of all staff members in a team increases the level of expertise when dealing with specific challenges or problems.

When individuals cannot be empowered further, collective responsibility can be given to a team. Empowerment of a team, however, must happen gradually as the team develops to accept increasing responsibility, become more self-directed and take ownership of the product or service they are delivering. Commenting on the impact of collective responsibility Hargreaves (1992, p. 64) make the point that educators and heads of department to be 'less independent and more interdependent, it also implies that in becoming more interdependent teachers accept and learn to work together in collaborative groups'.

The efficiency and effectiveness of an educational institution depends on the quality of the people in a team. The practice of collegiality at an educational institution is that something is gained when educators work together and something is lost when they do not. Clarke (2007, p. 45) claims that 'none of us is as smart as all of us'. According to Thurlow (2003, p. 105) educators collectively have 'great power to subvert, constrain or ignore changes they do not accept, because after all, they do the work'. Commenting on the quality of the people, Clarke (2007) makes the point successful and effective teams do not simply happen, teams must be effectively managed and led. When the team members are focused and they are all working to accomplish the same purpose, teamwork can be very rewarding and productive. The longer the team has worked together, the greater the sense of team identity.

### **2.3.7 THE COMPOSITION OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS**

Some teams act more effectively than others. The reason for this is because of the composition of the teams that take into account the size of the team, the skills possessed by individual members that affect the way the team works and the range of behaviours that has an impact on the team's performance. According to Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 110, cited in Belbin's 1993, p. 25), the size of an effective team should include a variety of people qualities and has thus identified nine distinctive roles. Firstly, the chairperson controls and co-ordinates meetings but, however, is willing to be dominant when necessary. Secondly, the shaper pushes to get the work done and makes things happen. Thirdly, the innovator has the ability to advance new ideas. Fourthly, the resource investigator explores resources available outside the group and develops a wide range of external contacts. Fifthly, the monitor evaluator thinks in a critical way, analyses ideas and is a good evaluator. Sixthly, the team worker promotes harmony, understands the strengths and weaknesses of the team members. Seventhly, the completer insists that the project is completed on time. Eighthly, the company worker is one who works with care and thoroughness. Finally, the specialist is one who has pre-existing specialist skills and knowledge which could be beneficial to the team. An important variable in teamwork is the number of members in the team (Bush & Middlewood, 2005). If the team is too large, it is difficult for individuals to make a meaningful contribution. Bush and Middlewood (2005) also explain that the bigger the team, the stronger the pressure of conformity.

Furthermore, Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 110) argue that, 'equally, small teams may be ineffective because they do not have sufficient collective expertise'.

### **2.3.8 DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE TEAMS**

Commenting on the impact of effective teams, Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 111) make the point that, 'teams form part of an essentially normative framework for school leadership and management, with several overlapping assumptions'. Hence, the authors provide four opinions to promote and sustain successful teams. Firstly, the head of the school (principal) should develop and communicate distinctive vision for the school. Developing a distinctive vision for the school has been further articulated in the work of Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 22). They assert that 'educational managers should try to develop visionary qualities and the ability to achieve objectives by goal setting and planning'. Secondly, to implement the principal's vision, leadership should be transformational. Thus, the staff and the wider school community will be motivated and inspired to implement the targeted vision. Thirdly, the members of the professional staff are encouraged to participate in teams, ostensibly on an equal basis, irrespective of the hierarchical structures within which they all work. Finally, leadership should embrace teamwork to lead to better and more widely accepted decisions. Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 112) contend that the beneficial effects of teamwork are assumed to arise from the 'interaction between people motivated to collaborate in order to achieve the desired outcomes'. Hence, the combined effects of the team are potentially greater than individuals acting alone. Clarke (2007, p. 45) claims that effective teams are not only 'productive work units than individuals, they also contribute more to the organisations overall effectiveness'. Effective teams are developed by careful selection and good leadership and does not simply happen by chance.

### **2.3.9 MOTIVATING TEAMS**

Educational managers and team leaders need to know how to motivate their members in order to operate at an acceptable (optimal) level. People are motivated by different things. According to Clarke (2007), hard tangible things such as money and materials are not the most important thing that motivates people, but the softer less tangible things like freedom to develop their own ideas and a sense of being valued is most enduring. However, in a study conducted by Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 125)

they identify five categories of 'motivators' relevant to teamwork. Firstly, by completing a specific task or solving a particular problem, a sense of 'achievement' can be gained. Therefore, members of a staff working in a team on a challenging task may be appropriate. Clarke (2007, p. 44) asserts that individuals working in a team like to have 'control over decisions about what they do and how they do it', that is, to be creative, to try new ideas and to take responsibility for their own performance. Secondly, recognition by managers for work being well done. Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 112) contend that to be a team means to 'recognise and value of each member to a joint enterprise' on those things team members do well. Thirdly, the job becomes interesting provided creativity is encouraged. Creativity should be coupled with a vision and a variety of tasks should be assigned to the members of a team to expand their creative expertise. Fourthly, the acceptance of responsibility by employees plays an important role in their functioning. For example, school managers should delegate more tasks, thus allowing employees more opportunities to use their discretion and in general extend the boundaries of trust (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007). Finally, advancement opportunities (for example, for promotion) most certainly will motivate members of staff. Motivation is inevitable in schools. Therefore, managers must constantly motivate educators so that effective teaching and learning can take place and other tasks and responsibilities assigned to them will be achieved. Furthermore, Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) contend that if team leaders encourage motivation, you will get much more out of your team if you are positive, likeable, polite, generous and handle mistakes positively and fairly rather than otherwise.

### **2.3.10 KEY FACTORS IN SUCCESSFUL TEAM FUNCTIONING**

A range of factors can lead to 'enhanced team functioning' provided the right mix of roles are found for successful team functioning (Humphrey, Moregeson & Mannor, 2009, p. 48). According to Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 118) successful teams do not happen by chance, but they have to be intentionally created and systematically managed. In addition, Clarke (2007, p. 45) asserts that successful and effective teams do not simply happen, and they can easily become 'ineffective and problematic if they are not effectively managed and led'. Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 118) contend that there are six important factors that influence the successfulness of a team. Firstly, the individual in the chair needs to be fairly senior and his or her profile should



closely match that of the co-ordinator. The focus is on the individual and how the individual difference impact on team performance. Secondly, a winning and successful team needs one good innovator as more than one can reduce the successfulness of the team. The innovator must be in a position to advance new ideas co-ordinate and synthesise knowledge. In addition, Aycan (2011, p. 4) explains in team functioning the innovator or leader must be 'skilful in both maintaining good interpersonal relations and setting high performance'. Thirdly, there has to be a good spread of mental abilities in the team, however, Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 119) claim that there should not be too many very 'bright sparks or dull ones'. In addition, Bush and Middlewood (2005, p. 110) contend that if the team is too large, it is difficult for individuals to make a meaningful contribution and therefore the meetings are likely to be dominated by the chairperson. Equally, small teams may be ineffective because they do not have 'sufficient collective expertise' (Bush & Middlewood, 2005, p. 110). Fourthly, a good spread of personal characteristics giving a wide coverage of team roles causes less friction and greater success. A study conducted by Humphrey, Morgeson and Mannor (2009, p. 48) found that the different characteristics of role holders impact team effectiveness because roles 'typically are occupied by multiple individuals'. Fifthly, by awarding team members the responsibilities that fit their team role profiles, will ensure good results. In addition, Aycan (2011, p. 5) asserts that for effective team functioning 'members compatibility in terms of interpersonal relations' should be given special attention. Finally, teams that discover an imbalance, have the ability to adapt or change roles in a team in order to build on their strengths or make-up for their weaknesses, have a clear advantage.

### **2.3.11 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT WITHIN TEAMS**

People deal with conflict in different ways. According to Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) when working in teams; conflict is considered 'inevitable' and normal in organisations. Therefore, when we work in teams, we need to be tolerant, patient, flexible, receptive and less judgemental (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007).

Aycan (2011) explain that members of a team, before they start to work together, the team should establish norms and ways on how to handle difficult team members. There are many ways of dealing with conflict; however, three styles of conflict management will be discussed. Firstly, the avoidance style can be used when the

issues underlying the conflict are very insignificant or when there is little chance of achieving success, that is, it is very difficult to change team members' attitude (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2002). An important advantage of the avoiding style is that it buys time to give the conflicting parties a chance to cool off (Lumby, Middlewood & Kaabwe, 2003). Studies conducted by Squelch and Lemmer (1994) are also in agreement that time is needed for cooling off. Secondly, managers who use the accommodating style feel it is better to give up their own goals rather than risk alienating or upsetting members of a team (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994). Furthermore, the accommodating style could be a good strategy when the head of an educational institution is wrong but indicates reasonableness to come to an agreement with the other party. The accommodating style of resolving conflict mean that one member of a team satisfies the interest of the other members of the team at his or her own expense (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2002). Thirdly, the compromising style according to Steyn and van Niekerk (2002) is a give and take style based on the viewpoint that people can't always have their own way and have to find a middle ground they all can live with. Through compromise, relationships can endure if individuals hear each other's point of view in a team and try to come to reasonable and fair agreement.

### **2.3.12 MONITORING TEAM PERFORMANCE**

To maintain the performance of teams and assist team members to realise their full potential, Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 131) make the point that 'systems for monitoring performance have to be in place'. It is essentially the function of the school management teams (SMT) to ensure that team work is properly monitored to ensure acceptable levels of performance. Teamwork has become an essential element for successful functioning of organisations. Therefore, on a continuous basis, teamwork needs to be evaluated and monitored. Some of the activities for monitoring team performance suggested by Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 131) are:

- The principal having regular meetings with his/her deputy or second charge.
- Speaking regularly to individual members and listening to their comments.
- Spending time with team members, on an informal basis to get the feel of what is happening.
- Requesting progress reports from team members regarding team meetings.
- Ensuring that record books are inspected and endorsed where necessary.

- Walking around the team areas with a view to monitoring the environment.
- Checking to see that items that require priority status are given the necessary attention.
- Asking members of the team for feedback on the performance of the team.
- Linking staff appraisal (for example, Integrated Quality Management System) to team functioning.
- Ensuring team agendas are provided to management and offering invitations to occasional team meetings.

Finally, ensure that all team meetings are conducted regularly, minutes are kept properly, attendances to meetings are monitored and team agendas are followed. Aycan (2011) contends that team member's performance evaluations should not be done individually but has a team. She suggests that the poor performers should be monitored through either periodical or anonymous peer evaluations or careful observations in group meetings.

## **2.4 SUMMARY**

This review has highlighted literature related to a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school. The two theories that underpin my study have been discussed, namely, distributed leadership theory and collegial theories of management. A review of literature around teams has then been presented. A discussion on the purpose of teams, the types of teams, the characteristics of teams, the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach, the composition of teams, developing and motivating teams, the key factors in successful team functioning, styles of conflict management and monitoring team performance followed.

The next chapter describes the research design and methodology used to collect and analyse data in this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter focused on the theoretical framework that informs this study and the literature reviewed around the critical questions. The focus of this chapter is on the research design and methodology employed in this research study in order to answer the following key research questions generated in chapter 1:

- How is a team-based approach operationalised in a rural school?
- What are the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach in a rural school?

An account on the research paradigm employed in this study is furnished. This is followed by a discussion on the methodological approach of this study. An account on the data collection methods, sampling, data analysis techniques, ethical issues, trustworthiness and limitations of this study is then presented.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A paradigm is a framework within which theories are built, that fundamentally influences how you see the world. This study is located within an interpretive research paradigm. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) the world is changeable and it is people who define meaning of a particular situation. Through the interpretative paradigm, the researcher would begin to experience how people make sense of the contexts in which they live and work.

Research activity is informed by three concepts, namely ontology, epistemology, and methodology. According to Maree (2007, p. 55) ontological assumptions concern 'the nature of reality'. In other words, how people view reality? This reality is in a sense a subjective one. In this study the researcher set to explore how the participants

in this rural school viewed a team-based approach to leading and managing a school. It is thus the subjective views of the participants.

In terms of epistemology, Maree (2007, p. 55) explains that epistemology looks at how one knows reality, the method of knowing the nature of reality and therefore assumes a relationship between the 'knower and the known'. In qualitative research, Maree (2007) contends that knowledge should emerge from the local context. The researcher should privilege the voice of the 'insiders, taking into account what people say, do and feel, and how they make meaning of the phenomena under investigation' (Maree, 2007, p. 56). In other words knowledge is socially constructed. Hence, the role of the researcher should be to understand real-life situations from the point of view of the insider, instead from the point of view of the outsider. Consequently, the researcher set out to understand how the participants understood and made meaning of a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural school.

In terms of methodological assumptions of working within the interpretative paradigm, it seeks to increase understanding of why things are the way they are in the social world and why individuals or people act the ways they do (Tuli, 2010). According to Tuli (2010) a qualitative methodology underpins the interpretivist paradigm. Consequently, qualitative methods are used in this study to gather data from the participants.

### **3.3 METHODOLOGY**

I embarked on a qualitative research approach to my study. According to Creswell (2009) qualitative research is useful for exploring and understanding phenomena. The inquirer in a qualitative research asks participants broad, general questions, collects the detailed views of participants in the form of words or images and analyses the information. From this data, the researcher interprets the meaning of the information, drawing on personal reflections and past research. Henning (2004, p. 3) explains that 'in qualitative research we want to find out not only what happens but also how it happens and, importantly, why it happens the way it does'.

This research is a case study. A case study research design was used to gain an in-depth understanding about a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural

primary school. A case study, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 181) ‘provides a unique example of real people in real situations’. Noor (2008) contends that a case study enables a researcher to gain a ‘holistic view’ of a certain phenomenon. Commenting on the impact of case studies, Baxter and Jack (2008) explain that a case study methodology provide tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their context. Furthermore, when the case study is applied correctly, it becomes a valuable method to evaluate programmes and develop interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In addition, Maree (2007, p. 75) makes the point that case studies ‘opens the possibility of giving a voice to the powerless and voiceless’, which in my study were participants from a school employing a team-based approach to leading and managing the school, voicing their concerns and experiences *via* interviews.

### **3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

#### **3.4.1 SAMPLING**

One rural primary school was purposively selected in the eThekweni Region of the Ilembe District. Purposive sampling is a deliberate choice or selection of context or participants (Cohen et al, 2007). The context was purposively sampled as it is based in a rural area and is a primary school. Furthermore, the context is easily accessible to me as it is based in the same region that my school is situated in, so collecting data could be easily obtained. The selection of participants involved making decisions about which people, settings, events or behaviours to observe (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). For this study, in terms of participant selection, I chose purposive sampling based on convenience. Maree (2007) contends that a hallmark for useful sampling in qualitative research is that the participants and the context are purposively chosen to accomplish specific goals related to inquiry. The participants were selected because of some defining characteristics. That is, they are professionally qualified, are above 40 (forty) years of age and have more than 20 (twenty) years of professional experience. Purposive sampling means that I made specific choices about which people to include in the sample. According to Maree (2007), purposive sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind. The sample comprised two male and three female participants to accommodate gender representation. The principal, head of department (intermediate phase), head of department (foundation phase), one level

one educator (intermediate phase) and one level one educator (foundation phase) who are concerned with the day-to-day professional activities of the organisation and the delivery of its performance were selected.

One data collection method was used *viz.* interviews.

### **3.4.2 INTERVIEWS**

An interview is a specialised form of oral, face-to-face communication between the researcher and the participant. Maree (2007, p. 87) describes an interview as a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data to learn about beliefs, opinions, ideas, views and behaviours of the participant. Interviewing participants provides insight into their world, their thoughts and feelings. The researcher is present with the participant and therefore can make the questions clear. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 349) interviews enable participants to discuss their 'interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view'.

Individual interviews come in different forms and types for example, standardised interviews, in-depth interviews, ethnographic interviews, structured and semi-structured interviews (Cohen et al, 2007; Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were used as a technique for data generation. Commenting on the impact of semi-structured interviews, Tong, Sainsbury and Craig (2007, p. 351) make the point that in semi-structured interviews the researcher can 'explore the experiences of participants and the meaning they attribute to them'. Cresswell (2009) explains that semi-structured interviews are useful for understanding how participants view their worlds and that deeper understandings are often developed through dialogue. The researcher is in a position to motivate participants to talk about issues that are important to the research question. Open-ended questions may be asked in a one-to-one interview, hence, the researcher may re-word, re-order or give clarity to questions, with a view to further investigating areas of concern raised by the participant (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007). It is easier for participants to talk to an interviewer than to write down lengthy responses, therefore, more detailed and descriptive data can be collected, by interviewing a small number of people.

Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility to probe interesting areas that may arise and the interview can follow the participant's interests or concerns thus producing rich data. The impact of probing has been further articulated in the work of Maree (2007, p. 87) who states that semi-structured interviews 'does allow for the probing and clarification of answers'. In addition, Maree (2007, p. 87) feels that as a researcher one must be attentive to the responses of one's participants, hence, one can identify 'new emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon being studied, and explore and probe these'. Cohen *et al* (2007) further asserts that semi-structured interviews make it possible to probe deeply and analyse intensely the issues that are being investigated.

The advantage of interviews is that it can be conducted at an appropriate speed, allows for greater depth, hence, enabling more to be said by the participant about the research (Cohen *et al*, 2007, p. 352). However, the limitations of interviews are that participants may choose to withhold information. To overcome the limitations, the researcher created an atmosphere of trust. Commenting on the impact of trust, Cohen *et al* (2007, p. 350) make the point that there must be a relationship between participant and researcher to transcend the research so that 'a feeling of togetherness and joint pursuit of a common mission rising above personal egos is achieved. The researcher ensured confidentiality, questions were phrased in a non-threatening manner and the researcher did not openly disagree with what the participants said. A combination of listening, analysing and asking probing questions were exercised.

To set up the interviews the researcher visited the sampled school a week before the interviews were scheduled. This was to build rapport with the participants and explain the purpose of the study. Separate interview schedules were prepared for the principal, head of department and level one educators to facilitate the meaningful progression of the interviews. The interview schedule was made available to the participants a week before the interview.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising the data whereby known facts collected from raw data are categorised into patterns and regularities (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). All five interviews were audio recorded. Seeing



that participants may be intimidated by a voice recorder and may choose to withhold information from the researcher, the researcher negotiated and explained the use of the recorder in advance. The interviews were then transcribed. The transcripts were then read to identify units of meaning. Units of meaning were then grouped into common categories, patterns and themes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

### **3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES**

Ethics in research is very important, particularly with research involving humans; hence, ethical issues were taken into account (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (see page iii). Permission was obtained from the Department of Education in order for the researcher to conduct the research at the school (see Appendix A, page 79). Upon receiving ethical clearance from the University and permission from the department respectively, the researcher proceeded to contact the principal of the sample school to obtain permission to undertake the research project. The researcher met with the principal and the four other participants and discussed the purpose of the study. Each participant was given an official letter requesting for permission to pursue the research (see Appendix C, page 83). In order to respect the autonomy of all the people participating in the research, written permission was obtained from all five participants of the sample school.

Having obtained permission to conduct the research, ethical issues including anonymity and confidentiality were considered. According to Cohen and Manion (1995, p. 366) ‘the essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity’. Hence, to protect the participants, they were identified by using pseudonyms, the name of the school was not revealed and they also had the freedom to withdraw from the research at any time (see Appendix C, page 84).

With regard to confidentiality, the researcher reassured the participants that their participation will not be revealed in the report writing, nor will it be revealed in the dissemination of the findings of the research (see Appendix C, page 84 ).

### **3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

To increase trustworthiness in qualitative research the following four issues have been taken into consideration: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007). According to Sondelowski (1996, p. 44) a study may be considered as credible when the descriptions presented are accurate in as far as the people who share the experience would immediately recognise the description. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 296) assert that credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a 'credible' conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data. To address credibility, I engaged in 'member checking' with all five participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each participant received (hand delivered) a copy of the interview transcripts for review, clarification and suggestions. Suggested changes were made and the transcripts were re-sent to the five participants for verification. All data have been verified and captured through this process. Secondly, transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004). In my study, I ensured that sufficient information is provided so that it can be used in new situations. Hence, I attached copies of the interview schedule as an appendix to my study for any other researchers who want to repeat the study. Thirdly, dependability is an assessment of the quality of the integrated process of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, dependability is the test for consistency and if the study is repeated, the findings would be consistent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addressing the issue of dependability, this was achieved through the individual interviews. To increase trustworthiness, the semi-structured interviews were audio-taped. The tape recordings of the semi-structured interview session produced a more complete record of what was said. In addition, to secure an accurate account of the conversation and to avoid losing data, the cassettes were numbered to avoid complications. Finally, confirmability, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected. Confirmability was enhanced by ensuring that the findings were the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants (Shenton, 2004). Further, the study was given to a critical reader who holds a PhD to ensure that the findings are consistent with the data presented.

### **3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The challenge to this study would be that it was conducted with a small sample (does not represent the wider population) from a single primary school using only one method of data collection and therefore the findings cannot be 'generalised' (Neale, Thapa & Boyce, 2006). This qualitative case study was based on experiences of five participants from one site. A case study according to Maree (2007) allows for multiple data sources to be used. Although the opportunity to gather data from various sources is attractive, there are possible dangers (Baxter & Jack, 2008). One of them being the management and analysis of overwhelming amounts of data which may result in researchers finding themselves 'lost' in the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). However, my intention is not to generalise but rather to make meaning of how a team-based approach to leading and managing a school plays itself out at this one school. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations will assist in further research.

### **3.9 SUMMARY**

The chapter presented the research paradigm. It also covered the methodological approach of this study. An account on the data collection methods, sampling, data analysis techniques, ethical issues, trustworthiness and limitations of this study was also presented.

The next Chapter deals with the data analysis, findings and discussion.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodology employed in this study. This chapter focuses on the analysis, findings and discussion of the data. The data is presented using themes and sub-themes generated from the semi-structured interviews. *Verbatim* quotations are used in the presentation of this chapter in order to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost. A discussion of the data in terms of the theoretical and conceptual tools as well as other scholarly works is then presented.

#### 4.2 THE SAMPLED SCHOOL AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

A brief background of the sampled school, Manchester Primary School (pseudonym) and the research participants are provided.

##### **Manchester Primary School**

Manchester Primary School serves a rural squatter community on the outskirts of Durban North, called Upper Tongaat. This rural school was originally built in 1954, by the then South Indian community, for the teaching of the Indian vernacular language, Tamil. The school is a very old brick and tile building with limited space in and around the school. Through socio-political transformation over the years, the school now caters for a multicultural society from grade R to seven. In terms of phases within the General Education and Training Band, the school offers three phases namely, the foundation phase, intermediate phase and senior phase. The learner enrolment is 322 (ninety six percent African learners) and the quintile ranking in terms of the national Norms and Standards for School Funding is four. This means that the school is classified more towards the least poor end of the funding continuum. The staff complement is 10, made up as follows: one principal, one head of department (intermediate phase), one acting head of department (foundation phase) six level one educators and one non-teaching staff member. The majority of the

parents whose children attend this school are unemployed or work as casual labourers. There is evidence of HIV/AIDS infected and affected learners at this school. HIV/AIDS and poverty has impacted negatively on this school by increasing the demand for pastoral and caring work. The pressures are now increasing at school level as the numbers of cases of affected and infected learners are steadily increasing.

### **Profile of Participants**

A brief narrative on the biography of each participant is presented. The five research participants were allocated pseudonyms in order to protect their identities.

#### **Participant One: Ms Daisy**

This participant, Ms Daisy is a 43 year old, Indian female, and is currently teaching for 24.5 hours in the intermediate phase of Manchester Primary School. She has 20 years' service with the Department of Education. She has been teaching for 18 years at this school. Ms Daisy is a level one educator with Senior Educator status. This participant, an experienced educator, has the following qualifications: Bachelor of Science Degree (BSc), Higher Diploma of Education (HDE), Bachelor of Education Honours (BEd Honours) and is a Master of Education student (MEd – specialising in Curriculum Studies). Her additional duties at this school include sports co-ordinator, scholar patrol mistress, excursion co-ordinator, summary register co-ordinator and secretary of Staff Development Team.

#### **Participant Two: Mr Brown**

Mr Brown is a 49 year old, Indian male and is teaching for 18 years at Manchester Primary School. He has 21 years' service with the Department of Education. This participant, an experienced level one educator, is teaching in the foundation phase and has the following qualifications: Bachelor of Arts Degree (BA) and Higher Diploma in Education (HDE). Mr Brown has been coaching soccer and cricket for 15 years and 5 years respectively to promote sport at his school. He has achieved Senior Teacher status at Manchester Primary School.

#### **Participant Three: Ms Lilly**

This participant is a 51 year old, Indian female and is a Head of Department in the Intermediate/Senior phase department of Manchester Primary School. Ms Lilly is an

experienced educator and has the following qualifications: Under-graduate Diploma in Education (UDE) (Senior Primary), Higher Diploma in Education (HDE), Bachelor of Education (BEd), Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Management and Master of Education (MEd – specialising in Educational Management). She has 30 years' service with the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department. Ms Lilly has been teaching for 11 years at Manchester Primary School. For her meritorious service she received three merit notches from the Department of Education. She acted principal from January 1999 to February 2000 and from August 2003 to January 2005 respectively.

**Participant Four: Ms Rose**

Ms Rose is a 50 year old, Indian female. She has Master Teacher status and is an acting Head of Department in the foundation phase department at Manchester Primary School. She has 29.5 year's service with the Department of Education. This participant has acted principal in the absence of the principal. She has 28.5 years of experience at this school. This participant is an experienced educator and has the following qualifications: Junior Primary Education Diploma (JPED), Higher Education Diploma (HED) and Bachelor of Education Honours Degree (BEd Honours). Some of her additional duties at this school include: secretary of the School Governing Body, Debs Ball co-ordinator and chairperson of the Foundation Phase committee.

**Participant Five: Mr White**

Mr White is the Principal of Manchester Primary School. He is a 57 year old, Indian male with 36 years experience with the Department of Education. He was promoted to Head of Department, after serving the Education Department for 21.5 years. Mr White, an experienced educator, is the Principal at Manchester Primary School for the past 12 years. This participant has the following qualifications: Senior Primary Education Diploma (SPED), Bachelor of Arts Degree (BA), Bachelor of Education (BEd – Educational Management). Mr White is also teaching for ten hours per week in the intermediate phase. His additional duties include: Chairperson of Principals Forum, Member of South African Principals Forum, and Secretary of 1860 Indentured Labour Foundation.

### **4.3 ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA**

The data from the semi-structured interviews were grouped into themes and sub-themes.

#### **4.3.1 OPERATIONALISATION OF A TEAM-BASED APPROACH**

In terms of operationalisation of a team-based approach, the following sub-themes emerged from the data: types of teams, formation of teams, decision making within teams, implementation of team decisions and professional development within teams.

##### **4.3.1.1 TYPES OF TEAMS**

The participants were asked to respond to the types of teams that are operational at their school. All five participants indicated that there were several types of teams operating within the school.

Mr White indicated that:

*'We have many teams in our school...we called them either committees or teams. We have the finance committee; school function committee;...management committee; timetable committee; discipline, safety and security committee; integrated quality management system committee; whole school evaluation committee; school development plan committee; a committee for the intermediate and senior phases and the foundation phase.'*

The comments made by Mr White were corroborated by Ms Rose. Ms Rose commented that:

*'Presently we have the management committee; school governing body; finance committee; intermediate phase committee; foundation phase committee; board of survey committee; excursion committee; social club; discipline, safety and security committee; teacher union committee; pupil welfare committee; a committee for school functions; a committee for speech and awards day; for debs ball and a fund raising committee...'*

The data suggests that at this school a variety of teams exist. This is consistent with the theory in distributed leadership. One typology on the types of teams is presented by Middlewood and Lumby (1998). According to them, teams may fall into three

categories, namely, statutory teams (for example, the school governing body), standing teams (for example, the school management team) and project or task teams (for example, the deb's ball team). Furthermore, Nakpodia (2011) as cited in Thompson (1986, p. 84) identifies five possible teams in a school system which involves using workers in decisions affecting their work through distributed leadership and participatory management. Firstly, senior management teams, which give high priority to the aims and policy and they are the executive members. Secondly, the middle management teams, which includes the heads of department or units who also share their ideas to develop school policies and enact consistent practices to operate successfully. Thirdly, staff teams which focuses on members within the departments or units in the school system. Fourthly, project teams which are established on an ad hoc basis to achieve the short term goals. Finally, the interdisciplinary teams which comprises of members from various departments to deal with the long-term issues.

The level one educators' named teams that they were familiar with; such as project teams, subject teams and pupil welfare teams. Learners experiencing academic, social or emotional problems at school are often discussed in some form of problem-solving team (pupil welfare team). Commenting on the impact of subject teams, Clarke (2007) explains that good teaching is the core function of any school and therefore subject teams are the ideal vehicle for monitoring and promoting good teaching. Good teaching practice should be a priority in every school; therefore time needs to be set aside for subject teams to meet, to share ideas and to discuss best practices. Subject teams need to meet at least weekly and it is recommended that this meeting should be scheduled into the school timetable (Clarke, 2007). In addition, if one is serious about good teaching and learning, leadership must ensure that subject teams meet on a formal basis for at least an hour every fortnight (Clarke, 2007). Good teaching is a priority; therefore, subject teams need to have formal agendas and minutes which need to feature on the agenda. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) view subject teams (school staff teams) as becoming increasingly important because the field of teaching has become complex and therefore effective teaching requires experts (team members) from different disciplines to make a positive contribution. To ensure good teaching is valued, schools should ensure that subject teams are provided with the time they need to promote effective teaching and learning. By SMT's



attending subject team meetings, it will make staff aware of the importance of such meetings.

The SGB team which is a statutory team needs to be properly constituted and must be in a position to navigate the various activities scheduled by the school. The key role team member's play and the relationship they develop are important for team effectiveness. Individuals filling key positions of leadership, on the SGB team, must be skilled and have the required expertise to lead and manage. If the SGB team needs to resolve a conflict, members must be skilled in managing the conflict process. If the issue is of a technical nature, leadership must be in a position to provide another individual who has the required technical expertise to address the concerns.

Schools may also use problem-solving teams (discipline, safety and security teams) to address student difficulties (Gregory, 2010). Problem solving teams may comprise of educators, specialists (for example, guidance councillor) and members from the parent component to develop individualised interventions to assist and support problematic learners. Problem-solving teams that are properly structured, well trained and that are well organised will be able to provide individualised interventions to assist student difficulties (Goltz, Hietapelto, Reinsch & Tyrell, 2008).

Task teams and *ad hoc* working teams, which may be part of the SGB team or SMT, may be established to deal with issues that are not part of the routine operational programme of the school (Clarke, 2007). For example, the task team may be established to investigate the legality of conducting random drug testing among learners and make such recommendations to the SGB. Establishing a task team to investigate issues will create an expectation of change. Therefore, task teams must be properly briefed with regard to their scope and limits of their work (Clarke, 2007).

#### **4.3.1.2 FORMATION OF TEAMS**

Concerning, how the teams were formed, three of the five participants indicated that members of the staff, either, volunteered their services, were democratically elected or served on the teams by virtue of the positions they held.

Ms Daisy indicated that:

*'Well in our school it's usually...discussions...negotiating, volunteering and sometimes you have to be in a team because of the position that you hold.'*

Mr White mentioned that:

*'The teams were formed primarily at a democratic staff meeting and the teachers either had to volunteer their services or they were nominated and seconded by others on the staff and the co-ordinator was chosen and thereafter other members of the team were elected.'*

Ms Rose stated that:

*'They were democratically elected or educators were asked to volunteer.'*

The research findings show that on most occasions the formations of teams are conducted through a volunteering process, through a democratic election process or people serve on teams because of the positions that they hold. In an ideal situation members with expertise may choose to join a team by volunteering their services and sharing their expectations regarding team functioning and norms (Boni, Weingart & Evenson, 2009). Members who perceive that they can make a contribution to the team's tasks; value the experience of working with colleagues and have the necessary interpersonal skills, most certainly should volunteer their services. Through discussions and negotiations, (before the formation of teams) individuals will have a better understanding of each other and hence the right people will be recruited to work effectively within specific project teams. However, although members serve on teams in a voluntary capacity, they should be rotated so that all the expertise available in a school can be shared. For example, in a school with more than one special education teacher, each person should take a turn to serve on this team. However, some team members might participate in certain formation of teams only when required, for example, such as speech and language therapists. On the other hand, some members are assigned to a particular team, not by a matter of choice, but because of the particular position (job) they hold. For example, school psychologists, administrators and others because of their particular expertise and skills. Members are brought together for a specific purpose, and when that purpose is accomplished, the team disbands. Edmondson and Nembhard (2009) explain that when a project

(for example, debbs ball) or area for exploration arises, team members are selected based on their unique ability to contribute to that particular project. Hence, some team members will work on that project until it is completed and then move on to the next project for which their specialised and unique expertise is required. In addition, Edmondson and Nembhard (2009) explain that individuals may work with different teams or multiple projects because this flexible arrangement allows projects to be staffed by appropriate specialists, due to the positions they hold.

Through a democratic election process, individuals may also serve on statutory and non-statutory teams. The *South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996* requests that all schools have governing bodies, composed of elected representations of the various parties in the particular school. Parents who have to be in the majority, educators and non-educators employed in the school may serve on the governing body provided that a democratic election process is followed. A chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer and secretary need to be democratically elected to serve on the SGB team. With regard to non-statutory teams (for example the school safety and security team) its formation rests with the democratically elected school governing body (Clarke, 2007). Through discussions the duly constituted SGB team may choose to co-opt members to the governing body team, especially where there is a need for people with special skills. Therefore, co-option of members will be dependent on the 'pool of knowledge' available by the duly elected members (Clarke, 2007). The co-opted members on the SGB may participate in their areas of expertise, but without voting rights. Depending on members area of expertise the following sub-committee teams may be established through a process of discussion and volunteering: finance, staffing, maintenance, fund-raising, co-curricular activities, safety and security and discipline teams.

#### **4.3.1.3 DECISION MAKING WITHIN TEAMS**

The participants were asked to what extent they were involved in decision making in a team-based approach. Two participants indicated that they were not consulted and the other participants indicated that although their roles were limited they could raise issues with the principal on an individual basis. Therefore the participants interviewed were divided in their involvement in decision making within the school.

Ms Lilly, in commenting on decision making within the school management team, stated the following:

*'That's a very short answer...I'm not involved...I know school management team meetings in different schools takes place where the notice is sent to the management, middle management and junior management teams the day before the meeting. Topics for discussion are discussed. Unfortunately for me that doesn't happen. Matters to be discussed are taken directly to the staff at a staff meeting.'*

Mr Brown raised the concern that:

*'...being a level one educator, our role is limited...but we do get the opportunity of airing our views. So if we are dissatisfied with any aspect, we are free to go to the principal and tell him what we feel...although, we have limited authority as such.'*

This study found that in some instances, participants were not fully involved in decision making in a team-based approach. There were also some significant tensions identified by the participants. Although participants generally showed high levels of commitment to participate in a team-based approach, it was clear that some members were either not given or given limited responsibilities of managing portfolios within the school. The best decisions are taken by utilising the skills and knowledge of all educators at educational institutions. Steyn and van Niekerk (2007, p. 111) contend that moving decision making to the lowest level in an institution, will not only build quality institutions but will also give scope for teamwork to flourish in schools.

While it is true that some decisions need to be made quickly, but failing to consult and lack of commitment to the process of decision-making within a team can create an array of problems and criticisms. Nakpodia (2011) postulates that teaming and consulting is like bridge building and therefore, it brings members of a team together to work for quality education. Nakpodia (2011) further articulates that members of a team, simply having a voice in decision-making is meaningless, unless each member of the team perceived the involvement as 'genuine and important'. Openness and trust will elicit ideas and suggestions from other members; hence schools can be improved through teamwork (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007).

However, some participants indicated that they participated freely in discussions, their feelings and individual areas of expertise were respected. According to Naidoo

(2008) research shows that heads, in pursuing a collaborative (shared-decision making) culture, brought about the creation of a new idea or vision for the school. A study conducted by Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Jean van Rooyen (2009) found that when teams share ideas, develop school-wide policies and enact consistent practices throughout the school, will most certainly improve classroom practice.

#### **4.3.1.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF TEAM DECISIONS**

The participants were asked to respond to how decisions taken at team meetings were implemented. All five participants agreed that implementation of team decisions are important. What came through clearly was that through feedback at team meetings, implementations of team decisions are monitored.

Ms Lilly stated that:

*'...sometimes when you bring it into a staff meeting some members will feel it's much work...they want to try to shelve it...and sometimes when it's something that's going to benefit them and the entire school...whether it's the learner population or the entire school community...we find that some members still want to shelve it. What I do...I take the suggestion to the intermediate phase...then I know when I take it to the entire staff I got the backing of three other people...so myself four.'*

In addition to the above, Ms Daisy stated the following:

*'By feedback...well all teams have to give a report back... the report back tells us exactly what is happening so we know whether it's lagging or we are going forward or what more can we do about it.'*

Besides what was stated by the above participants, Mr Brown made the following remarks:

*'Well...if something is not done, then at the next meeting...we can air our views and say that this is what we discussed at the previous meeting and we see that it had not been done. So we have the platform where we can air our views and also our dissatisfaction...and we have minutes and things like that.'*

This study confirms that meetings of the team need to be scheduled on a regular basis so that team members can report on progress and share ideas on their successes and

challenges (Clarke, 2007). Clarke (2007) contends that it is advisable and sensible to set up task teams. Task teams must be encouraged to assist with any new implementation that is to achieve the goals that have been agreed. For example, when change needs to be implemented, it might not be welcomed or appreciated by everyone. Sometimes team members make democratic decisions taken at team meetings to fail, by responding unexpectedly because they are afraid to engage in something of which they are unsure. It is recommended that meetings need to be held on a regular basis, either weekly or fortnightly to monitor implementation (Clarke, 2007). However, once implementation gains momentum, meetings may be scheduled at less frequent intervals.

In addition, a study conducted by Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008) found that people can tell you the most beautiful things in a meeting situation, the most beautiful ideas, but when it comes to reality, team decisions are not implemented. The reason cited was that principals of educational institutions preferred to do everything themselves. However, Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) contend that managers should delegate more. Furthermore, allow educators opportunities to use their discretion and in general the boundaries of trust should be extended. Planning and implementation of team decisions should involve people at various levels. Collective responsibility for implementation of team decisions would make educators keener to see that decisions are carried out. Hence, the involvement of all team members increases the level of expertise when dealing with specific challenges or problems and therefore, democratic decisions taken will be implemented effectively.

The field of teaching has become more complex, therefore frequency of meetings are found to be an essential component for implementation of team decisions thus promoting team work (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). Frequency of meetings brings about face-to-face communication which is the most beneficial mode for implementation of team decisions (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). The more often the team meets, the more teammates are motivated and committed to team decisions.

#### **4.3.1.5 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEAM**

The participants were asked to respond to how professional development within the school as a team is carried out. Three participants indicated that it was done at school

through workshops and report backs from meetings they had attended. One participant indicated that to develop her expertise and her own professional growth, she sought help from outside the educational institution.

Ms Rose stated that:

*'He conducts workshops with us and he allows us to conduct workshops as well...present papers, it keeps us informed about all the latest trends in education. He attends meetings and he reports back to us. We are given the opportunity to attend departmental workshops for ourselves and present report back meetings to the staff...'*

Contrary to the above comments, however, Ms Lilly stated that:

*'Well! What I do...if I need help...I know I'm not getting it from school. I phone my professor, my supervisor at Unisa and I get help there...especially with the new curriculum that's changing so often. Currently we found that workbooks are not working...I told the principal repeatedly...now I'm working with my supervisor from Unisa.'*

Ms Daisy commented that:

*'I know that there was one workshop carried out for corporal punishment...but other than that no! ...I think it's more oral it's not like where you have a workshop.'*

There were contrasting findings with regard to professional development. The data suggests that sufficient professional development is an area for concern. South Africa currently faces tremendous challenges of which several are curriculum related, therefore it is the responsibility of every educator to identify and make use of professional development opportunities. Professional development is an ongoing development programme focusing on the wide range of skills, attitudes and knowledge that are required to educate the learner more effectively (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007). SMT's therefore must create opportunities with the school, which will promote instructional development and recognise and reward quality teaching. By conducting an audit of staff expertise, we will be able to identify who may be willing to lead professional development activities. Commenting on the impact of professional development, Harley (2007) makes the point that since educators' classroom behaviour and ways of thinking are influenced by their beliefs and

knowledge, an important component of their professional development needs to be the expansion of their professional knowledge base. Ongoing professional development is important to ensure effective teaching and learning is taking place to improve classroom practice (Clarke, 2007). Some educators may require more intensive and specialised forms of support and development to be able to develop their full potential. For example, inclusive education and training system must be organised by leadership in such a manner that the training (professional development) will provide various levels and kinds of support to education.

The SMT is therefore responsible for educator professional development in the classroom to optimise teaching quality for the purpose of ensuring lasting outcomes. Where educators were concerned and suspicious about development, they will come to appreciate the idea of appraisal as a means of developing professional skills and knowledge and dealing constructively with shortcomings. Educators will be able to grow professionally if they extend their services in a variety of activities, such as attending workshops, seminars, participation in community meetings, activities and programmes which are all an excellent source of professional development. Professional development must be organised, supported and sustained to ensure long-term commitment to learners.

In the current changing situation in education in South Africa, the need for a constructive, well planned staff development programme is important for supporting the aims and objectives of the school. Furthermore, educators are expected to spend an 'additional eighty hours a year on professional development outside their normal school hours to ensure that learners are provided with the best education they can offer (Clarke, 2007). Professional development works best where there is common commitment to personal improvement through professional development and to the sharing of resources, including ideas, skills and time (Clarke, 2007).

#### **4.3.2 CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES OF A TEAM-BASED APPROACH**

In terms of challenges and possibilities of a team-based approach, the following sub-themes emerged from the data: challenges experienced in role performance, managing conflict, advantages of team-based approach, motivation and monitoring and evaluation of team performance.



#### **4.3.2.1 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN ROLE PERFORMANCE**

The five participants were asked to respond to the challenges they experienced in role performance. Four participants indicated that the challenge they encountered was a resistance to change. One participant indicated that her relationship was strained; there was insufficient support and lack of consultation from the school SMT.

Mr White mentioned that:

*'Most of the challenges that I've come across were minimal, but some of the challenges that I did encounter was a resistance to change and we find that some of the staff once they have their set ways they do not like to change.'*

Some of the comments made by Mr White were corroborated by Ms Rose. Ms Rose stated that:

*'There is resistance to change...because...at the moment there is a lot of change happening and we are still in a period of transition in South Africa...I feel that there are some of them that are not psychologically able to handle children and it is a challenge that we have.'*

However, one participant gave a different view on this aspect.

Ms Lilly stated that:

*'The first one is insufficient support from the principal and sometimes from the SMT and the SEM as well. I find that sometimes certain important matters are taken into the staff meeting where the principal should be supporting me...he is always in favour with the other educators and sometimes this is to the detriment of the project being completed successfully.'*

The study found that making sustained changes to an institution is a challenge. Therefore, the SMT who contemplates making changes needs to be aware of this from the beginning. Four participants agreed that there was resistance to change and one participant indicated there was insufficient support from various role players. Changes made must be in line with different needs and skills needed in the organisation. Resistance to change can create serious 'managerial problems' at school, which in turn can lead to deterioration in the standards of education (Mestry & Singh, 2007).

Bringing about major change in a complex institution like the school is a difficult task because politics, procedures and structures need to be altered and individuals and

teams have to be motivated to continue to perform. Therefore, SMT's are tasked to develop staff to enable educators to handle change effectively.

Change is a function of dissatisfaction with the present and is a shared vision of the future (Howett, 2007). Therefore, change is considered as an improvement over what exists, it should be spread as wide as possible and as soon as possible. Educational institutions that do not change and develop run the risk of stagnation and irrelevancy. Some of the reasons why change is inescapable are: changes in legislation, availability of resources, demographics, development of new technology and social reasons that necessitate that educational managers redesign the organisational structures and procedures, redefine priorities and redeploy resources.

The principal who is the 'gatekeeper of change' is therefore an important person to bring about the smooth transition of the change process (Fullan, 2009). However, this may not be the case at this school as one participant, Miss. Lilly, indicated that there was insufficient support from the SMT to facilitate the change process. The principal as a leader, together with the SMT of an educational organisation must be in a position to spell out the real responsibility of the school, reach out aims in the most effective manner and be able to organise and delegate to bring about sustained changes.

If successes are recognised, communicated and celebrated, it will increase the pace of change and commitment to the new way of doing things. In addition, educator practices must be reviewed and re-aligned by leadership to ensure that change is sustained and to enable people to operate in a new way (Howlett, 2007).

Another major challenge experienced in role performance is conflict. As one participant indicated that there is lack of support and consultation with the SMT and this has led to conflict with this participant and the SMT. Conflict has always been present in our societies and in our organisations and will always be with us. In other words, conflict is part of life and no society, community or organisation is immune to experiencing conflict at some time or another. Owens (2000) contends that conflict in organisations is now endemic and often legitimate. Given that human beings interact on a daily basis and also have to cope with the demands of the educational institution,

members of a team experience conflict at some time or another. Powerful hostility arising from conflict can have devastating impact on the behaviour of people in organisations. Conflict in an organisation can be a positive or negative force. Therefore, management of the school should not strive to eliminate all conflict, but must concentrate on conflict that will have disruptive effects on the school's ability to achieve educational goals. Thus, it is not the conflict itself that is important but rather how it is approached and managed. Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) feel that whether conflict has negative or positive consequences or both, depends largely on the approach followed and the nature of the solution. Commenting on the impact of conflict Lumby, Middlewood and Kaawe (2003) make the point that too little conflict in an organisation shows a lack of interest on the part of the employees or even an evasion of responsibility.

Furthermore, conflict generally develops because of personality clashes within the organisation. In addition, people find it difficult to get along with others because they are divergent in thought and conduct. The study conducted by Lumby *et al* (2003 p. 189) explains the cause of conflict, 'a clash of personalities is one of the most common causes of conflict in schools'. Conflict may arise when for example; teachers who believe that the bulk of school fees should be spent on educational resources find themselves, working with teachers who believe that fees should be spent mainly for entertainment. People are seldom prepared to accept compromises about that which they sincerely believe in and it is very difficult to change people's values. Furthermore, conflicting values within a school community can result in serious and profound conflict, which usually is of the most difficult type to deal with. The differences of values and perceptions has been further articulated in the work of Lumby *et al* (2003, p. 189) 'it is the differences in people's values and perceptions that underlie most conflicts and should always be considered when managing conflict, irrespective of the direct causes'.

#### **4.3.2.2 MANAGING CONFLICT**

When working in teams, conflict is considered 'inevitable' and normal in organisations; hence, all five participants were asked how they managed conflict among team members (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007). Four of the participants

indicated that they used the avoidance and accommodating style respectively. One participant indicated that she managed conflict by respecting the different viewpoints.

Mr Brown mentioned that:

*'...we had some instances where the staff members did not even talk in the past...but the principal came and said...no leave it...cool down and when you cool down...we will discuss it further.'*

Ms Rose stated that:

*'We look at the different points of view...when there is conflict...people give their own view but we direct our attention to the goal that we need to achieve and how beneficial it would be to us and to the ethos of the school.'*

In addition, Ms Lilly indicated that:

*'...I know I can help, but sometimes I feel you caused it, you solve it...I know it's a very bad attitude to have but sometimes we need to be hard headed.'*

This study confirms that there are disagreements between two or more individuals within the institution. Stoner (1982) views conflict as a disagreement between two or more individuals arising from the fact of sharing of resources, differing status, goals, perceptions, value and hence, each party wants its own point of view to prevail. The data from this study also reveals that team members establish some norms and ways on how to manage difficult team members. This study found in some instances the avoidance and accommodating style were used to deal with conflict. When issues underlying the conflict are very insignificant or when there is little chance of achieving success, that is, it is very difficult to change team members' attitude, the avoidance style is used (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2002). An important advantage of the avoiding style is that it buys time to give the conflicting parties a chance to cool off (Lumby, Middlewood & Kaabwe, 2003). They are also supported by Squelch and Lemmer (1994) who is also in agreement that time is needed for cooling off. In addition, the accommodating style of resolving conflict mean that one member of a team satisfies the interest of the other members of the team at his or her own expense (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2002). Heads of educational institutions that use the accommodating style feel it is better to give up their own goals rather than risk

upsetting or alienating members of a team (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994). When the head of an educational institution is wrong, but indicates reasonableness to come to an agreement with the other party, adopting the accommodating style could be a good strategy.

Conflict within the organisation will seriously hamper morale and the improvement of a culture of teaching, learning and productivity. Whether or not conflict is destructive or constructive depends to a large extent on how it is managed (Owens, 2000). Conflict if managed properly, has many positive outcomes. When conflict arises out of an honest difference of opinion, the parties may realise that there are two or more alternative approaches, hence all of which may be valuable (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2002). The view, honest difference of opinion, where a choice must be made between two alternative methods is also shared by Van der Westhuizen (1991).

People are seldom prepared to accept compromises about that which they sincerely believe in and it is very difficult to change people's values. However, the compromising style is a give and take style based on the viewpoint that people can't always have their own way and have to find middle ground they all can live with (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2002). Hence, through compromise, relationships can endure if individuals hear each other's point of view in a team and try to come to reasonable and fair agreement. Furthermore, conflicting values within a school community can result in serious and profound conflict, which usually is of the most difficult type to deal with. The differences of values and perceptions has been further articulated in the work of Lumby *et al* (2003, p. 189) 'it is the differences in people's values and perceptions that underlie most conflicts and should always be considered when managing conflict, irrespective of the direct causes'.

#### **4.3.2.3 ADVANTAGES OF A TEAM-BASED APPROACH**

The five participants were asked what were the advantages associated with a team-based approach. All participants indicated that by having 'multiple individuals' (distributed leadership) in a team working together, it is easier to handle projects and achieve educational goals (Coles & Southworth, 2005). In addition, all participants indicated that team members continually learn from one another and therefore a team-oriented environment contributes to the overall success of the educational institution.

Mr White stated that:

*'We find that in a team-based approach you have more members working in a committee and it is easier to handle a project or an event or programme. The members in the committee each take a different aspect of a programme or project and are able to work together to achieve the goal.'*

Another participant, Ms Lilly stated:

*'...within the team you find that you do more because of the shared responsibilities... there's lots of brainstorming taking place and you'll find that many heads come out with many good ideas and we can all learn...when we come out from the meeting we find that we come out with more than what we went in with.'*

The study reveals that members of the staff supported and engaged in team work. A strong benefit identified by participants was the idea that educators were capacitated and empowered through teamwork. It emerged from the data that the workload was shared among team members. The idiom 'many heads come out with many good ideas', expressed by one participant is in keeping with Clarke (2007) claim that 'none of us is as smart as all of us'. Participants showed high levels of commitment towards distributed leadership by stating that two or three educators help and with the result there is a growing tendency for success. Thurlow (2003) explains that through shared responsibilities (collegial processes) educational goals and projects can be achieved. Therefore, collegiality can broadly be defined as educators conferring and collaborating with other educators and that something is gained when educators work together as a team (Thurlow, 2003). Collegial processes can be workable, provided that all the individuals in an educational institution contribute at an acceptable level.

Singh, Manser and Mestry (2007) explain that collegial management should be viewed as a process that encourages, motivates and accommodates shared decision-making and shared leadership in the spirit of enabling people to want to act. Furthermore, Cavanagh (2010) found that the benefit of shared decision-making is that decisions are more likely to translate into actual practice and realisation. In addition, Davis (2009) found that educators who work with fellow educators, share the same passion and drive for excellence in the classroom, endure change easily together whether it is positive or not.

As with the distributed theory, if tasks are distributed there is not only easing of workload, but by utilising the skills and knowledge of educators at educational institutions, the best decisions are taken and since it is shared decision-making, educators see to it that it is implemented. Naidoo (2008) explains that shared decision-making brought about the creation of a new idea or vision for the school. Shared decisions are likely to be better informed and are also much more likely to be implemented effectively to bring about school improvement.

When decisions are reached by a process of discussion and consensus, the practices of collegiality at educational institutions becomes attractive. Collegiality therefore advocates educator participation in decision making, discussions are open and without hidden motives. Hence, educators feel free to make suggestions, provide information, raise ideas and deliver constructive criticism in a relaxed and supportive climate with a view to resolve issues, if there are any, by agreement.

#### **4.3.2.4 MOTIVATION**

Concerning the strategies initiated to motivate members of a team, all five participants made mention of the importance of being recognised and being encouraged for their efforts in order to operate at an acceptable level. One participant further indicated that, by meeting regularly with members of the team and by monitoring and encouraging progress, members of a team feel motivated and hence operate at an optimal level.

Mr Brown stated that:

*'The HOD...at the last year's awards function; she gave each teacher a sports medal...in front of the entire school population and parents. We were taken by surprise. She thanked us for the wonderful work we have done. I think that was a kind gesture...made us feel good.'*

Another participant, Mr White stated:

*'...we have meetings with them regularly and I call them quite often to the office to find out how they are progressing. Once you encourage them a little and tell them you are on the right track, the teachers feel motivated.'*

Some of the comments made by Mr White were corroborated by Ms Rose. Ms Rose commented that:

*‘Compliment them on their achievements, encourage them and set achievable goals.’*

The data in this study suggests that the participants were often encouraged and motivated by the SMT and hence this motivated the participants to improve their work performance. Leaders in a team are able to raise standards by motivating and inspiring educators (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & van Rooyen, 2009). To be a team means to recognise and value every team member to a joint enterprise on those things team members do well (Bush & Middlewood, 2005). Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) point out that recognition by managers for work being well done by members of a team, plays an important role in team functioning. Educator motivation is important because educators who are motivated often look for the best way in which they can accomplish tasks and responsibilities assigned to them. Motivation is believed to be an enabler for learning and academic success (Law, Sandnes, Jian & Huang, 2009). It is imperative for educational school management teams to have a thorough understanding of motivation if they are to motivate their staff to achieve the vision and mission of an educational institution.

Encouraging and complimenting team members to complete specific tasks or solving unique problems, a sense of achievement can be gained. It is therefore important to give team members challenges that involve the entire school. However, Clarke (2007) feels that the strategy should be to focus on challenges that team members do well. This will create an environment which will encourage individuals to give of their best.

Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) postulates that individuals in a team are encouraged and motivated by intrinsic appeal of a task. Delegating a variety of tasks and encouraging creativity will motivate team members. Allowing and encouraging team members to use their own discretion, showing that they are being trusted and giving full authority to take responsibility for their decisions will boost and motivate team morale. In order to enhance the boundaries of trust, SMT’s should delegate more and allow more opportunities for team members to use their discretion. Freedom to develop their own ideas and being valued are tangible things that will motivate individuals (Clarke, 2007).



SMT's meeting; supporting and encouraging team members on a regular basis will motivate members to remain committed to their tasks and will derive a sense of satisfaction from their tasks, even under stressful circumstances (Clarke, 2007). A study conducted by Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) also found that when team members are motivated they will be committed and involved in achieving the teams goals and tasks. Motivated teams will take responsibility for achieving tasks. The tasks will become more important and significant time will be committed towards the tasks. To overcome task failures, team members will have to work towards constructive disagreement, hence obstacles will be treated as challenges and team goals will be achieved.

#### **4.3.2.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF TEAM PERFORMANCE**

All five participants were asked to evaluate whether their teams performed effectively. The participants agreed that everything they did were subject to evaluation at report back meetings. Shortcomings of team performance, strengths and areas for development were identified at team meetings. In addition, one participant indicated that in order to monitor team performance, classroom supervision was undertaken. These were some of the comments:

Ms Lilly stated that:

*'This is what we do after any project...we get together and we do a report back and we discuss the success, the weaknesses and the strengths of that project...we then try to find solutions to improve on our weaknesses.'*

Mr White, on this issue had this to say:

*'...you find that during our meetings and report backs from each of the teams we ask them how far they have developed...we keep a check to see how they have progressed with the implementation of these programmes...and in this way it will be easy to evaluate the effectiveness of these performances. There are also feedbacks from teachers themselves. If they are performing effectively you find that they are well motivated and happy to do what they are doing. If there are shortcomings then we have other members of the committee to help...'*

Ms Rose mentioned that:

*'...supervision of teachers records, classroom teaching, providing guidance to the teachers, encouraging them by using positive reinforcements, developing them in their weak areas and allowing their personal growth to motivate them to conduct themselves in a professional manner.'*

All the participants indicated that they evaluate their strengths and areas of weaknesses and work on improving or correcting their weaknesses. Steyn and van Niekerk (2007) contend that to maintain the performance of teams and to assist team members to realise their full potential, systems for monitoring and evaluation of team performance have to be in place. Some of the activities for monitoring and evaluation of team performance suggested by Steyn and Van Niekerk (2007) are: the principal having regular meetings with school management teams and asking members of the team for feedback on the performance of the team; requesting progress reports from team members; speaking regularly to team members, listening to their comments and spending time with team members to get the feel of what is happening. Aycan (2011) contends that evaluation of team performance should not be done individually but has a team and therefore suggests that poor performers should be evaluated through either periodical peer evaluation or careful observations in group meetings. Clear direction and understanding about team performance can be further achieved by having regular meetings, class visits, interviews and one-to-one conversation. Harley (2007) explains that meeting regularly over time, for the purpose of increasing their own and their students learning and development by engaging in joint work, critical reflection and problem solving can be achieved.

The aim of evaluation is to facilitate the personal and professional development of all educators in a team in order to improve the quality of teaching practice and education management. Furthermore, evaluation is a process through which the school management team (SMT) provides assistance to team members to improve the quality of work. In addition, SMT's are mostly concerned with the growth and development and those who report to them. Evaluation is a crucial aspect in the organisation because it monitors team performance according to predetermined criteria. The key aspect of evaluation is that it allows for corrections to be made and to identify problem areas and work on ways to correct them. In addition, it provides information about the service in order to improve the quality of the service delivery and to

demonstrate a high level of accountability. Nolan (2004) contends that an effective evaluation system must be capable of remediating or eliminating poor performance as well as nurturing excellent performance. Therefore, if evaluation is conducted properly it would be time well spent, not only will it be beneficial to identify team members for promotion and competency proceedings but the school goals, aims, vision and mission will be achieved. The two main purposes for team evaluation are to safeguard the educational interests and welfare of learners and to ensure that team members are able to fulfil their contractual duties (Middlewood, 2001).

Mayrowetz (2008) explains that by having several people involved in professional development, will lead to 'collective capacity building' which eventually will lead to organisational and instructional improvement. Due to democratic changes in 1994, the Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS) was introduced to monitor educator performance, appraise and evaluate team members. The principles of IQMS generally identifies' three main purposes. Firstly, monitoring and evaluation is conducted to review performance, identify strengths and areas for development. Secondly, it provides information about the quality of service in order to improve the quality of service and to demonstrate accountability. Thirdly, monitoring and evaluation is aimed at encouraging personal and professional development. The main purpose of monitoring and evaluation of team performance is to provide ongoing support so that members of a team can constantly improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Monitoring and evaluating educators will ensure that school management team make sound judgement and measure success by how well learners do. The more serious the problems of the environment in which a school has to function, the greater the demands on the skills and qualities of educators and school management team of that school. Therefore, educational institutions must recognise the need to pursue quality and deliver it to the learners. Some of the sources of quality in education could be good examination results, outstanding educators, support of parents and the community, strong and empowered leadership and effective utilisation of resources.

Monitoring and evaluating team performance can also be a form of motivation and it gives educators a chance to voice any concerns they have. The lay method of

monitoring, (supervision) according to Nolan (2004) to achieve quality schooling was to remove deficient teachers, a statement which is highly controversial and debateable. However, Banks and Mayers (2001) contend that the multifaceted appraisal and performance management scheme was designed (IQMS) to improve performance by attracting, motivating and retaining high quality educators and to have in place a new robust system for appraising team members against clear objectives and outcomes.

The core mission of a school in monitoring and evaluating team performance is to improve the educational achievements of all learners (considering that majority of South African citizens come from an apartheid background) therefore SMT's must be able to identify to what extent the school is adding value to learners prior knowledge and understanding skills (Clarke, 2007). Hence, a demand that there be immediate improvement as a result of the dismal matric pass rate which followed after the amalgamation of the pre 1994 election into a single unified department, leads to greater accountability and team work in managing schools effectively (Clarke, 2007).

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

In this chapter the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were presented under themes and sub-themes. This chapter focused on the presentation, analysis, findings and discussion of the data.

In the next chapter, the main conclusions of this study are presented and certain recommendations are made.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter dealt with the analysis, findings and discussion of the data. In this chapter the main conclusions and recommendations are presented. After a careful consideration of the data from the semi-structured interviews, certain conclusions emerged in terms of the two critical questions outlined in chapter one. Hence, based on the findings and discussion of the data outlined in chapter four, pertinent recommendations are then made.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of this study was to explore how a team-based approach to leading and managing schools plays itself out in a rural primary context. From the findings of this study, certain conclusions emerged within the context of the key research questions outlined in chapter one. Teams have to learn how to negotiate with each other, exchange information and motivate individuals within the team so that they can work innovatively. Although the research findings indicate that there is evidence of teamwork, to improve effectiveness to higher levels, team members need to be fully involved in decision making. Failing to consult and lack of commitment to the process of decision-making within a team can create problems and criticisms. By taking decision-making to the lowest levels in an institution will build quality institutions (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2007). A shared decision-making culture will bring about the creation of new ideas and a vision for the school (Naidoo, 2008). In addition, simply having a voice in decision-making is meaningless (Nakpodia, 2011). Participants must be genuinely and honestly involved in the decision-making process.

To ensure achievement of school goals, teamwork is necessary. People working together, learning and sharing together and making improvements together will promote team effectiveness. The school principal plays an important role in creating and managing the different types of teams. Therefore, it is necessary to rotate and

expose members to the different types of teams. For example, a maths teacher may also have something to contribute to the special education teacher that will help promote teaching (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). When members of a team have good interpersonal and problem-solving skills, decision making is more effective because teams bring together various skills and expertise (Goltz, Hietapelto, Reinsch & Tyrell, 2008). The difficult school conditions and challenges such as coping with poor infrastructure; limited material, human and financial resources cannot be met and overcome by educators working in isolation, but require collective team action and creativity to find solutions to problems. Challenges cannot be achieved by educators working in isolation is also supported by Grangeat and Gray (2008). Similarly, they assert that challenges require collective action (team work) and the ‘creation of shared operative models for their resolution’ (Grangeat & Gray, 2008). Due to budgetary constraints, complex needs of learners and the demand for higher standards of achievement, warrants shared decision-making, team work and the continuing of professional development (Mestry & Singh, 2007). Hence, through team work schools can be managed more effectively and can respond to educational changes and innovations more appropriately.

To improve teamwork the roles and responsibilities of team members must be clearly defined and articulated by SMT’s. To minimise unpleasantness and team rivalry, SMT’s must establish norms on how to handle difficult team members and set ground rules regarding meeting procedures. To improve interpersonal relationships, SMT’s must organise social activities and be sensitive to feelings of insecurity among team members. By SMT’s inculcating feelings of acceptance and trust among team members, it will increase group cohesiveness and improve interpersonal relationships (Aycan, 2011).

Since this is a case study of one rural primary school, the findings cannot be generalised to all schools. Future research including a wider sample is needed to explore a team-based approach to leading and managing rural primary schools.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations with regard to a team-based approach are suggested to bring about school improvement:

#### **RECOMMENDATION ONE**

Team meetings need to be scheduled on a regular basis so that team members can report on progress and share ideas on their successes and challenges. Formal and informal meetings are a basic prerequisite for team innovation and evaluating team performance, therefore, positive consideration must be directed towards imposing procedures regarding meetings, their documentation and enforcement to ensure that meetings do take place. For example, what are the norms that will guide how the team will work together or using a check list to assess team performance on a regular basis? A large percentage of teams do not meet frequently because when workload and other priorities increase, meetings are cancelled due to time constraints (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). Therefore, the frequency of meetings, an essential ingredient for promoting teamwork, will most certainly set the stage for enhanced team processes to occur in teams. In addition, frequency of meetings will enable team members to learn how to interact and engage in exchanging information in order to maximise teams' effectiveness. Hence, modifying meetings, dates, times and lengths may be necessary to ensure that report back meetings are reviewed thoroughly. Further, in order to improve school effectiveness, a weekly schedule of hours devoted to team meetings is recommended (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007).

#### **RECOMMENDATION TWO**

Given the importance of team interaction, it is recommended that suitable, ongoing professional development training of team members is undertaken. Educators are expected to spend an additional eighty hours a year (which is not happening) on professional development outside their normal school hours to ensure that learners are provided with the best education they can offer (Clarke, 2007). Budgeting for staff development will ensure members of staff will always be trained and their skills will be updated which will lead to continuous improvement and effectiveness of teams. Professional development in the form of in-service training should be initiated on an ongoing basis to promote professional growth so that schools may be managed at acceptable levels (Mestry & Singh, 2007). Schools should therefore assist educators

with professional development by means of school knowledge management strategies; team learning and teacher cooperation and knowledge sharing strategies (Zhao, 2010). Hence, with knowledge in hand, educators will be in a better position to address the gap between what they are currently doing and what they need to change in order to find solutions to problems (Sobel & Steele, 2009). Effective teams do not simply happen (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009). For teams to be effective and successful they require training and development; they need to learn and work together and should reflect on their performances constantly.

By providing appropriate professional development, educators will learn how to transform their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their learners' growth. Cognitive and emotional involvement in professional development, individually and collectively will bring about improvement at educational institutions (Avalos, 2011). Hence, structured and well co-ordinated courses and workshops may serve some purpose. By creating space, time, structure and professional training for educators is important to improve school and team effectiveness (Gajda & Koliba, 2008). Participation in community meetings, activities and programmes is an excellent source of professional development. Professional development, therefore, must be supported by all role players (including the school governing body) and must be sustained to ensure long-term commitment to learners.

### **RECOMMENDATION THREE**

Resistance to change can create serious managerial problems at school, which in turn can lead to deterioration in the standards of education; therefore, SMT's are tasked to develop staff to enable change effectively (Mestry & Singh, 2007). In order to overcome the resistance to change, we need to have a clear vision and rationale to change; why change, what needs to be changed and the kind of change that is required; plan how the change will be brought about by setting out defined objectives and responsibilities; acknowledge and celebrate milestones achieved, no matter how small; be patient and keep the momentum going and communicate effectively with all the members of the team at all stages (Robertson, Robins & Cox, 2009) as cited in Pennington (2003) and Morgan (1986). In addition, successful change requires not just technical expertise from SMT's but also sensitivity to human dimensions because change may bring about a shift in power, authority and influence (Robertson, Robins & Cox, 2009).



#### **RECOMMENDATION FOUR**

While it is true that some decisions need to be made urgently, failing to consult and lack of commitment to the process of decision-making can create an array of problems and criticisms, therefore, by moving decision-making and consultation to the lowest level in an institution (like the school) will not only build quality institutions but will also give scope for teamwork to flourish in schools.

Team members should have a voice in decision-making which must be genuine and important. Openness and trust will elicit ideas and suggestions from other team members and therefore the school can be improved through teamwork. When teams share ideas and develop school-wide policies, schools will most certainly improve classroom practice.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FIVE**

Conflict if managed properly, has many positive outcomes; therefore team members must be prepared to accept compromises in which they believe in. Through compromise, provided it is within the framework of policy, relationships can endure if individuals hear each other's point of view in a team and try to come to reasonable and fair agreement.

Negative feelings and confrontations are allowed to be expressed by team members, provided it is managed and dealt with professionally (Owens, 2000). Whether or not conflict is destructive or constructive depends to a large extent on how it is managed (Owens, 2000). Managing and dealing with conflict must be seen as a way to improve team performance. In accordance with Steyn and van Niekerk (2002), they suggest that when conflict arises out of an honest difference of opinion, the parties may realise that there are two or more alternative approaches and therefore all of which may be valuable.

#### **RECOMMENDATION SIX**

To improve the quality of teaching and learning, SMT's must ensure that ongoing monitoring and support are provided to all the members of a team. Monitoring and evaluating team members will ensure that SMT's make sound judgement and measure success by how well learners do (for example, annual national assessment test results). In addition, monitoring and feedback of team performance can also be a

form of motivation and it will give members of a team a chance to voice any concerns they have. Feedback must be given as a way of evaluating teams' performance and it must be done with a desire to help follow team members.

#### **RECOMMENDATION SEVEN**

Sufficient support and attention should be given equally to all members of a team because when ambiguity and uncertainty are high, team performance may suffer (Edmondson & Nembhard, 2009). The study conducted also found that teams face many challenges which are similar to Cranston and Ehrich's (2009) findings. For example, lack of clarity and expectations among team members. Therefore, SMT's must assign clear tasks to all members of a team, regularly assess team performance using a checklist and regularly review and monitor progress of team work to sustain team effectiveness.

#### **5.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter outlined the main conclusions drawn in this study. In addition, based on the findings and the conclusions drawn in this study, relevant recommendations were made.

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## **APPENDIX A: LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT**

### **LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

5 Dove Place  
Flamingo Heights  
TONGAAT  
4399

Phone: 032- 9444385  
Cell: 083 78 24385  
School: 032- 9471246  
e-Mail: Juliangovender [62@gmail.com](mailto:62@gmail.com)

**FOR ATTENTION:** Sibusiso Alwar  
Research Unit  
Resource Planning  
KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education  
Private Bag X9137  
PIETERMARITZBURG  
3200

### **APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Kindly be informed that I am currently completing my Masters of Education Degree (MEd) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). My topic for research is:

**A team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school.**

School leadership and management in South Africa have undergone significant changes in the post-apartheid era. Changes in legislation, availability of resources, demographics, development of new technology, new funding arrangements, new labour relations and the introduction of a new outcomes-based curriculum has been some of the significant happenings in education. As a result of changes in terms of democratisation of education, managers of schools are increasingly being held accountable for schools performance. Hence, a growing concern is the persistent poor performance of South African students not only on national tests (Christie, 2008) but also on international tests such as Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) where South Africa has twice come last out of all the African countries that participated (Scott, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Rooyen (2009) noted that majority (70-80%) of primary school children from rural disadvantaged schools 'are completing their primary education without being able to

read fluently in the school's instructional language. In addition, Bush *et al* (2009) reported that in South African schools, there is very limited research and literature on managing and leading, teaching and learning and that there are schools that are 'unable or unwilling to promote team-work within their learning areas'. Being a Deputy Principal of a primary school, on a daily basis I am exposed to challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach to leading and managing. Hence, my motivation for conducting this educational research.

Furthermore, I wish to reassure you of the following:

- Participants will not be revealed in the report writing, nor will it be revealed in the dissemination of the findings of the research.
- Participation will be voluntary.
- The institution will not be identifiable by name in the research results.
- Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained at all times
- The school may withdraw from the study if it wishes to do so at any time.
- The research will not be conducted during contact time.

My supervisor is Dr Inba Naicker, a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus.

I, hereby humbly request permission to conduct the above mentioned research study in one primary school in the Ilembe District. A sample of educators will be interviewed from the selected school.

I thank you in advance for your support and co-operation.

Yours faithfully

P. GOVENDER

(Student – 208524830)

## **APPENDIX B: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL/GOVERNING BODY**

### **LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

5 Dove Place  
Flamingo Heights  
TONGAAT  
4399

Phone: 032- 9444385  
Cell: 083 78 24385  
School: 032- 9471246  
e-Mail: Juliangovender [62@gmail.com](mailto:62@gmail.com)

The Principal/Chairperson of School Governing Body

### **APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – MR P. GOVENDER**

Kindly be informed that I am currently completing my Masters of Education Degree (MEd) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). My topic for research is:

A team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school.

School leadership and management in South Africa have undergone significant changes in the post-apartheid era. Changes in legislation, availability of resources, demographics, development of new technology, new funding arrangements, new labour relations and the introduction of a new outcomes-based curriculum has been some of the significant happenings in education. As a result of changes in terms of democratisation of education, managers of schools are increasingly being held accountable for schools performance. Hence, a growing concern is the persistent poor performance of South African students not only on national tests (Christie, 2008) but also on international tests such as Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) where South Africa has twice come last out of all the African countries that participated (Scott, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Rooyen (2009) noted that majority (70-80%) of primary school children from rural disadvantaged schools 'are completing their primary education without being able to read fluently in the school's instructional language. In addition, Bush *et al* (2009) reported that in South African schools, there is very limited research and literature on managing and leading, teaching and learning and that there are schools that are 'unable or unwilling to promote team-work within their learning areas'. Being a Deputy Principal of a primary school, on a daily basis I am exposed to challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach to leading and managing. Hence, my motivation for conducting this educational research.

Furthermore, I wish to reassure you of the following:

- No participant will be identifiable in any way from the research results.
- Participation will be voluntary.
- The institution will not be identifiable by name in the research results.
- A synopsis of the most important findings will be forwarded to your school, upon your request.
- The school may withdraw from the study if it wishes to do so at any time.
- The research will not be conducted during contact time.

I would like to conduct the research as from August to September 2011.

Should you have any concern about this study, please contact my supervisor, Dr Inba Naicker, a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus.

I thank you in advance for your support and co-operation.

Yours faithfully

P. GOVENDER

(Student – 208524830)

**REPLY SLIP**

**FOR ATTENTION:** Mr P. Govender

c/o Primary School

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (MEd)**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal of \_\_\_\_\_ Primary)

hereby, give permission to Poovalingum Govender to carry out the educational research at \_\_\_\_\_ Primary School.

Yours faithfully

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P R I N C I P A L

-----  
D A T E

**SCHOOL STAMP**

## APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

### LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT: BY EDUCATOR

5 Dove Place  
Flamingo Heights  
TONGAAT  
4399

Phone: 032- 9444385  
Cell: 083 78 24385  
School: 032- 9471246  
e-Mail: Juliangovender [62@gmail.com](mailto:62@gmail.com)

**FOR ATTENTION:** \_\_\_\_\_ [Participant]

c/o \_\_\_\_\_ Primary School

### CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – MR P. GOVENDER

Kindly be informed that I am currently completing my Masters of Education Degree (MEd) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). My topic for research is:

A team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school.

School leadership and management in South Africa have undergone significant changes in the post-apartheid era. Changes in legislation, availability of resources, demographics, development of new technology, new funding arrangements, new labour relations and the introduction of a new outcomes-based curriculum has been some of the significant happenings in education. As a result of changes in terms of democratisation of education, managers of schools are increasingly being held accountable for schools performance. Hence, a growing concern is the persistent poor performance of South African students not only on national tests (Christie, 2008) but also on international tests such as Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) where South Africa has twice come last out of all the African countries that participated (Scott, 2011, p. 2). Furthermore, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Rooyen (2009) noted that majority (70-80%) of primary school children from rural disadvantaged schools 'are completing their primary education without being able to read fluently in the school's instructional language. In addition, Bush *et al* (2009) reported that in South African schools, there is very limited research and literature on managing and leading, teaching and learning and that there are schools that are 'unable or unwilling to promote team-work within their learning areas'. Being a Deputy Principal of a primary school, on a daily basis I am exposed to challenges and

possibilities associated with a team-based approach to leading and managing. Hence, my motivation for conducting this educational research.

Furthermore, I wish to reassure you of the following:

- Your participation will not be revealed in the report writing, nor will it be revealed in the dissemination of the findings of the research
- Participation will be voluntary.
- The institution will not be identifiable by name in the research results.
- You may withdraw from the study if you wish to do so at any time.
- The research will not be conducted during contact time.

You are humbly requested to participate in this research project.

I thank you in advance for your support and co-operation.

Yours faithfully

P. GOVENDER

(Student – 208 524 830)

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**DECLARATION**

**REPLY SLIP**

**FOR ATTENTION:** Mr P. Govender

c/o Primary School

**RE: CONSENT TO CARRY OUT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (MEd)**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project entitled, A team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time, should I so desire.

Yours faithfully

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SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

-----  
DATE

**SCHOOL STAMP**



## **APPENDIX D: FORMAT OF THE INTERVIEW**

### 1. Introduction:

Thank interviewee for his/her participation

- The researcher introduces himself and then gets to know the interviewee.
- The interviewee completes the biographical information (for example: age, gender, qualifications, teaching experience etc.)
- Researcher explains the purpose of the interview
- The researcher stresses confidentiality and anonymity of the school and interviewee

### 2. Questions:

- The researcher will pose the interview questions.

### 3. Closure:

- The researcher thanks the interviewee
- The researcher requests permission from the interviewee for further contact to clarify certain issues if necessary.

## APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Please complete (by placing an x where applicable) the following information which is required by the researcher in order to complete a narrative of the participant:

1. What is your present occupational status?

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	PLACE AN: X
Educator	
Senior Educator	
Master Educator	
HOD	
Principal	

2. Sex

Male	
Female	

3. Age

20 - 30		31 - 39		40 - 49		50 - 59		60 - 65	
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4. Number of years at present school: \_\_\_\_\_ years.
5. Number of years teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_ years.
6. Kindly state your teaching qualifications:

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7. Are there any other additional responsibilities that you have at your school? If yes, please complete:

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## **APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - PRINCIPAL**

**P. GOVENDER**

**STUDENT NO: 208 524 830**

#### **TITLE OF DISSERTATION:**

**A team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school**

#### **CRITICAL QUESTION ONE**

**How is a team-based approach operationalised in a rural school?**

1. What teams do you have operating in your school?
2. How were the teams formed?
3. To what extent and how would you involve all role players in decision making in a team-based approach?
4. How do you, as a principal, ensure that democratically taken decisions at team meetings, are implemented effectively?
5. How do you as the principal assist members of your team to develop professionally?
6. Describe briefly how you will evaluate whether your team is performing effectively?

#### **CRITICAL QUESTION TWO**

**What are the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural school?**

1. Describe briefly, what are some of the challenges that you encounter in the performance of your role in a team?
2. Conflict is considered inevitable and normal in an organisation. How do you manage conflict among team members?
3. What are some of the possibilities (advantages) associated with a team-based approach?
4. Tell me about how you as the principal initiate strategies to motivate members of a team?
5. What systems or control measures do you have in place for monitoring team performance?

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

**P. GOVENDER**

**STUDENT NO: 208 524 830**

### **TITLE OF DISSERTATION:**

A team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school

### **CRITICAL QUESTION ONE**

**How is a team-based approach operationalised in a rural school?**

1. What teams do you have operating in your school?
2. How were the teams formed?
3. To what extent, and how does your Principal involve you in decision making in a team-based approach?
4. How do you ensure, as a Head of Department, that democratically decisions taken at team meetings are implemented?
5. How does your principal assist you to develop professionally?
6. Describe briefly how you will evaluate whether your team is performing effectively?

### **CRITICAL QUESTION TWO**

**What are the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural school?**

1. Describe briefly, (as Head of Department) what are some of the challenges that you encounter in the performance of your role in a team?
2. Explain how do you manage conflict among team members?
3. What are some of the possibilities (advantages) associated with a team-based approach?
4. Talk about how you would initiate strategies to motivate members of a team?
5. As a middle manager (HOD) what do you perceive as your role in monitoring team performance?

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – LEVEL ONE EDUCATOR

**P. GOVENDER**

**STUDENT NO:** 208 524 830

### **TITLE OF DISSERTATION:**

A team-based approach to leading and managing a rural primary school

### **CRITICAL QUESTION ONE**

#### **How is a team-based approach operationalised in a rural school?**

1. What teams do you have operating in your school?
2. How were the teams formed?
3. To what extent, and how does your school management involve you in decision making in a team-based approach?
4. Tell me, how do you as a level one educator ensure that democratically taken decisions at team meetings are implemented effectively?
5. How does your Principal and Head of Department assist you to develop professionally?
6. Briefly describe how you will evaluate whether your team is performing effectively?

### **CRITICAL QUESTION TWO**

#### **What are the challenges and possibilities associated with a team-based approach to leading and managing a rural school?**

1. Explain what are some of the challenges that you encounter in the performance of your role in a team?
2. How does the principal/HOD manage conflict among team members?
3. Describe briefly, what are some of the possibilities (advantages) associated with a team-based approach?
4. Tell me about how your principal/HOD initiates strategies to motivate members of a team?
5. How does the principal/HOD deal with monitoring of team performance?

APPENDIX G: PERMISSION FROM THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



**kzn education**

Department:  
Education  
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.: 2/4/8/104

Mr Poovalingum Govender  
5 Dove Place  
Flamingo Heights  
Tongaat  
4399

Dear Mr Govender

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS**

Your application to conduct research entitled: **A Team-Based Approach to Leading and Managing a Rural Primary School**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The Period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 September 2011 to 31 September 2012.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report or dissertation or thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following Schools and Institutions:

  
Nkqsinathi SP Sishi, PhD  
Head of Department: Education

  
Date

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G 25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, Pietermaritzburg, 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/11 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | email: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za

