

**A STUDY OF PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM  
DECISION-MAKING IN TWO SECOND SCHOOLS  
IN AMANZIMTOTI CIRCUIT**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Prior to the present era, participation in curriculum decision-making at a school level has been very limited in South Africa. The decisions made at schools could be described as implementation as these were influenced to a large extent by the decisions that were made at a higher level. The education system was thus correctly described as very authoritarian and highly centralised at the hands of the authorities in the Department of National Education (NEPI: 1992; King & van den Berg (1991); Christie (1989); Kallaway (1984).

The proposals of recent policy documents, such as NEPI (1992) and a Policy Framework for Education and Training (1994), tried to change the above scenario by proposing a broader participation by major stakeholders in schools like parents, learners and educators in curriculum decision-making of the schools. These policy documents culminated in the enactment of the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996 which officially gave powers to major stakeholders in schools. Governing bodies consisting of learners, parents and educators became the most powerful structure in a school responsible for the governance of the schools. The governing bodies thus assumed powers and duties that they had never had or had little to do with in the past. Parents and learners were now expected to play a major role in the process of making curriculum decisions.

This study aims at investigating what curriculum decisions schools make, who makes these and how this is done with an aim to determine the extent to which the major stakeholders (parents, learners and educators including the principal and other promotion post holders) in a school do participate in making major curriculum decisions in their schools.

The study was conducted in two secondary schools in Amanzimtoti Circuit which falls under Umbumbulu district of the Durban South Region of the KwaZulu-Natal Province in the Republic of South Africa.

A written questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used to gather data from the respondents in the two secondary schools. To choose respondents from the two schools, a stratified random sample was used but, in a case where only one person occupied a post in that level, that occupant automatically became part of the sample.

The main findings of the study were :-

- Stakeholders interviewed (educators, learners and parents) do take part in curriculum decision-making in the two secondary schools but, this happens differently for different levels.

- Whilst many of the stakeholders interviewed are eager to take part personally in the curriculum decision-making process of their schools, not all of them have the confidence and the ability to do this.
- Trust and confidence, by some of the respondents, in the principals and educators tend to make these respondents to lean back and relax, which then makes the principals and educators to be more prominent during the curriculum decision-making process.
- All respondents have confidence and hope that the prospects for an all-inclusive and a participative curriculum decision-making approach are bright and promising for the future.

The recommendations made include continued assistance to be given to schools in the form of in-service training and workshops for both parents, educators and learners, including the principals of schools, to equip all of them with the necessary skills for effective participation in curriculum decision-making in schools.

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references.

---

L.E. DLUDLA

OCTOBER 2001

## **APPROVAL OF THESIS SUBMISSION BY SUPERVISOR**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION , JUSTIFICATION AND DIRECTION OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The dawn of a “new South Africa” has seen a proliferation of education policy and legislation specifying and advocating full participation by stakeholders in the governance and management of schools. There is a continuous reference being made to the democratization of schools and the education system as a whole.

The documents that have made this call include the National Education Policy Investigation Report (NEPI,1992); a Policy Framework for Education and Training (1994), the White Paper on Education and Training (1994 ); which all culminated in the South African School's Act No.84 of 1996 which is currently the driving force behind the operation of all schools in South Africa.

However, it cannot be overlooked that participation or deliberation on issues is not a process without problems especially to those who are expected to embark upon it from a different tradition altogether. It will be remembered that the South African education system and its decision-making structures have always been very notorious about the way in which decisions about the curriculum were made before the new dispensation. NEPI (1992), King and van den Berg (1991) and Christie (1986) all confirm the authoritarian and top-down mode that has always been in use in South Africa over the years. This tended to filter down to school's curriculum decision-making as well.

It is the intention of this study to investigate the extent of participation by educators, parents and learners as important stakeholders in curriculum decision-making in two schools that will be selected. The researcher believes that if he can find out the decisions in which these stakeholders participate he can be in a position to determine the extent to which they participate in curriculum decision-making in their schools.

The need for continued transformation of education in South Africa is imperative and indispensable. All reform initiatives emphasize the need for democratic and decentralized education management and hence curriculum decision-making. This emphasis implies that there is a need on the part of the National Department of Education to continue to decentralize and devolve powers to provinces, regions, districts and more so, to schools. The focus is on democratization participation and inclusion, not the authoritarian and top-down mode that was dominant prior to the 1994 elections. The recent initiatives on participative decision-making require a shift from a rigid and hierarchical management structures to more flexible and open structures that will allow for meaningful inputs from teachers, parents, students and the community.

This means that the anticipated groups of people (teachers, pupils and parents) must be empowered to have the necessary knowledge to make these important and crucial decisions. If this empowerment does not happen in a meaningful and effective way, they may not be able to make these decisions and there could be no democracy or participation in schools as the policy advocates.

We need to know the extent to which teachers, students and parents understand and participate in the governance of their schools. If we make policies, those policies must be able to deal with contextual issues. Contextual issues therefore need to be uncovered for any successful implementation of policies. Studies of this kind, where curriculum decisions are studied, are very rare especially in South Africa. The field of curriculum itself is not a field that has attracted enough attention from academics to grapple with and to come up with appropriate solutions that are still much needed in our education system.

This study approaches curriculum decision-making process and participation from a slightly different angle in the sense that all important stakeholders are investigated at the same time. This tends to give a clearer picture of what is actually happening in a school than in a case where only one side of participants e.g. parents or educators only, are investigated. The study is thus broader and has a bigger picture about who plays what role in a school's curriculum decision-making process.



Moreover, it should be noted that this study was undertaken five years after the South African School's Act of 1996 became officially operational. This Act gives increased responsibility to governing bodies of schools to make the most important decisions in the schools. This has happened despite the fact that these governing bodies have had no training to perform these new tasks and also that they may not be used to the new tasks which may then hinder their full and effective participation.

It is thus the object of this study to find out whether there is participation or not, five years down the line. In South Africa very few studies have been undertaken to do this. Most writings on curriculum decision-making are presently found in recent policy documents which advocate participative decision-making rather than report on existing levels of participation in schools.

This study is very crucial, especially at this time, because we are at the period when the new curriculum framework, famously known as Out Comes Based Education, (OBE) is gradually being introduced until its full implementation in the year 2005.

This new framework is based on assumptions some of which are the autonomy for the teachers as well as participation by teachers in making their own curriculum decisions in their classrooms to achieve the set outcomes. This means that if OBE is to succeed we need to know if the people who are to make it succeed do take part in curriculum decision-making now or not and, what can be done to enhance participation if there is none. The same applies to parents and learners in schools.

The aim of this study will be to establish the extent to which, the two secondary schools have developed or have made progress towards participation in the way they make curriculum decisions. This will be done by finding out from them as to who make what decisions about curriculum matters in their schools and how? This will then help us to establish how far have each school has made progress in fulfilling or not fulfilling what the current policy documents advocate.

To contextualise this study we will first look at the history of curriculum decision-making in South Africa.

## **1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

A history of curriculum decision-making in South Africa dates as far back as time immemorial. This is said because making decisions about what is to be learnt, organised and may be evaluated has been there since education itself. This study however, has no intention to go back this far, rather it will cover the period which is known as the Apartheid era and the period after that, which is known as the post-apartheid or the democratic era.

### **1.2.1 THE APARTHEID ERA**

The development of school curriculum before the 1994 elections was based on what was known as the "New Constitution of 1983" which itself was built on a powerful legacy of Apartheid or racial segregation, provincial control of White education and determined by the philosophy of Christian National Education (NEPI, 1992:9).

According to Christie (1986:79) "the government did all it could to control, rule, divide and close down all education institutions that were not under its direct jurisdiction". It made it extremely difficult for them to remain open and independent. This in a way tells us that the government wanted and succeeded in exercising total power and control over what was happening in schools during this period. Very little was left for parents, teachers let alone students to initiate in schools because everything was handed down to schools. It can be asked whether during this time there was any curriculum decision-making in schools at all. The answer could be that there was next to nothing since the large part of the curriculum was imposed from the top.

According to Kallaway (1984:9), the school syllabii stressed obedience, communal loyalty, ethnic and national diversity, acceptance of allocated social roles, piety and identification with rural culture. Education was used as a tool to impose a particular epistemology on a society that had no bargaining power with the state. Teachers, pupils and parents were alienated from meaningful participation in the decision-making process about curriculum and governance of their schools. Behr (1988) notes correctly that quasi-participative structures were prescribed to create the

illusion of stakeholder participation in the likes of school boards and school committees and prefects in schools.

One can say therefore that prior to 1994, curriculum decision-making was:-

- White dominated, giving other population groups only a semblance of involvement, thus un- and anti-democratic.
- The process was opaque and very bureaucratic and thus authoritarian,
- Teachers were hardly involved but experts from universities took an active part thus, making the curriculum too academic and subject based (King and van der Berg, 1991)

King and van der Berg (1991:17) conclude that; "Curriculum in South Africa was entrenched in historical and statutory contexts that characterized it as legalistic, bureaucratic and authoritarian." The authoritarian top-down approach that characterized the curriculum process in South Africa made it almost impossible for any autonomy of schools to exist. It made it totally impossible for schools to use their discretion in doing things. The over loaded nature of the core curriculum made it extremely difficult for schools to even have time to teach optional subjects like guidance and physical education in secondary schools. The NEPI Report (1992) points out that the syllabii were so detailed and so prescriptive that they allowed no room for teacher initiative. No spaces existed for the negotiation of the curriculum for it was seen as something operating outside the public domain.

### **1.2.2 THE POST APARTHEID ERA**

The 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1994 marked the birth of the new South Africa which led to new laws, regulations and processes aimed at promoting democracy in the country. Most of the laws enacted during the pre-1994 era were repealed and changed to be in-line with the new ideology which is democracy, equity and equality for all. This meant that the laws governing education were to be changed as well. The new ideology of democracy and stakeholder participation was cherished by both government as well as non-governmental organisations.

This view was also expressed by the Task Team on Education Management Development in its report released and presented to the Minister of Education in December 1996 which states that “Management is about doing things and working with people to make things happen. It is a process to which all contribute and in which everyone in an organisation ought to be involved” (p.27). It is clear from the above that the task team supported an all-inclusive and a participative approach to management in schools. It can also be safely said that this seems to be the view that will hold for curriculum-decisions as well.

The Task-team further expressed its belief in the inclusive and participative approach by saying that a school, like any other organisation, has a mission and is driven by values. The values are developed and owned by more than just the principal, or some outside authority but by all those who have an interest in the school. “A true culture of teaching and learning, as well as supportive management culture can only thrive in a school where the major stakeholders feel ownership of the school’s mission and ethos” (p.27).

The need to transform the traditional curriculum into a new one has always been felt and this only materialized as the Curriculum Development Working group of the National Curriculum Development Committee (NCDC) established an overall framework for general and further education and training in Mid-1996; the draft framework identified eight learning areas which would form the common core of the curriculum to which all learners in the formal general education band (compulsory schooling) will have access (Department of Education, 1996).

Notable with the new framework is that:-

- it saw the implementation of the curriculum as a gradual process.
- it suggested and facilitated meaningful participation of teachers to prevent alienation.
- suggested the development of new materials to encourage activity based, skill directed learning activities.

Underlying the New Policy is a concern with traditional content-based methods of teaching and training, consequently it calls for putting emphasis on what learners

should know and would be able to do at the end of a course of learning and teaching. The new framework puts emphasis on the learning process rather than on teaching input in terms of the content of the syllabus.

The new framework has good intentions as embodied in its principles and structures but there have been cries from teacher unions like South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) who claimed that the process is still too bureaucratic and has very little teacher and student participation. The Education Policy Unit at Wits also shared the same sentiments. They saw the process bound to be ineffective since it still excluded women and the youth. The time frames did not seem feasible to teacher unions and NGO's (Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa: 1993-1999).

The new curriculum framework however had problems. In a powerful critique of the new framework, which is also known as the Outcomes Based Education (OBE), which was due for implementation in 1998, Jonathan Jansen of the University of Durban-Westville outlined ten reasons why OBE would fail. Amongst these were that he saw OBE as:-

- Complex and confusing, with a language that only experts can understand.
- Teachers being in no position to carry out the OBE policy in practice.
- There are no adequate structures to support teachers and students to carry out this policy.
- The policy calls for training and retraining of teachers, new forms of assessment, classroom management and organisation, time for managing the process monitoring and evaluation of implementation, trained management and principals, parental support and involvement, new learning resources, and opportunities for teaches dialogue and exchange. The entire system thus needed to be restructured to support the new policy (Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa 1993-1999).

The complex nature of OBE as outlined above may very well alienate educators and parents and this is likely to hinder their meaningful participation in curriculum decision-making.

The beginning of 1998 saw the introduction of the new school curriculum in Grade one in Primary Schools in South Africa. However, due to a number of obstacles, the launch of curriculum 2005 or OBE got off to a less than dynamic start.

Despite a number of problems with the new curriculum framework it was expected that there would be a remarkable shift from the type of decision-making that was in place before the 1994 era. The White Papers on Education and Training (1995) the South African School's Act (1996) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) are based on new policies that contrast sharply with those prior to 1994. The regulations now propose a participative style of doing things at all levels of management and curriculum decision-making.

These give increased responsibilities to schools, districts, parents and students who are now to play a greater role in the management and development of school curricula. This has made communities to develop new expectations from schools and from teachers, and curriculum reform is posing new challenges for teachers, parents and students especially those that are in the school governing bodies and in the Representative Council of Learners in secondary schools.

If the formation of policies and processes of the new curriculum framework can be as participative and involving as it proposes to be, our education system is likely to change meaningfully and shift away from how things have always been done. The success lies in a full process of negotiation and consensus to be reached among stakeholders.

If what regulations stipulate is followed and observed, one can safely say that we have moved away from the Apartheid's top-down model of curriculum decision-making in schools. The real taste of pudding is however in the eating. It is still to be seen how these are put in practice and followed in schools. It is still to be seen

whether outcomes are defined and formulated in a way that the new framework and regulations stipulate.

In a recently released study by Chetty (1998) this does not seem to be the case. She concludes in her study that despite the ideals of transformation documents, it appears that many schools are still plagued by dictatorship, authoritarianism, and power struggles. She maintains that these are largely a legacy of the former education administrative system in which hierarchical structures and authoritarian values were the status quo.

The assumptions of the new curriculum framework are that curriculum decision-making is an inclusive, or participative and or democratic endeavour. It is thus a shift away from an authoritarian and a bureaucratic mode of the apartheid era. The new framework carries with it hope that schools are now very likely to have a meaningful contribution in making curriculum decisions than before.

### **1.3 STRUCTURE AND DIRECTION OF THE STUDY**

The study aims at finding out who makes what curriculum decisions in two secondary schools in Amanzimtoti circuit and how. This will help to establish the extent to which there is participation by all stakeholders, some of them or none at all.

**The first chapter** is introductory and provides the overview of the study as well as the justification of the study. In this chapter the historical background to the study is given with an aim of justifying a particular mode of curriculum decision-making relevant to that period.

**The Second Chapter** gives conceptual framework as well as clarity to what is meant by the concept curriculum as defined by different educationists with different interpretations.

To seek clarity on how decisions about curriculum may be made the concept of paradigms is introduced. Paradigms do not determine how curriculum decisions can be made but, they can be used as an analytical tool that helps us to have an understanding as to why people behave in a particular manner when they make those curriculum decisions. The characteristics inherent in each of the three paradigms will be clarified and the implications for making curriculum decisions in each will be sought.

**The Third Chapter** explains how this study has been designed and what methodology was used to elicit responses from the respondents. In this chapter methods used are accounted for and reflections on the study are provided.

**The Fourth Chapter :** This chapter explains how the research was undertaken in practice, analyses the responses and gives interpretations of the responses.

**The Fifth Chapter** gives the final conclusions and recommendations. What the researcher thinks ought to be done to encourage the participation of stakeholders in schools is also a focus of this final chapter.



## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING

#### 2.1 THE NATURE OF CURRICULUM

There are as many definitions of curriculum as there are curriculum specialists in education. Since the definitions are so many, there are bound to be different, divergent and convergent points of view as to what curriculum is. Numerous scholars, local and abroad, have given comments and definitions of curriculum. Let us look at a few of these scholars.

Goodson (1994) describes curriculum as a “multifaceted concept constructed, negotiated and re-negotiated at a variety of levels and in a variety of arenas” (p.111).

Longstreet and Shane (1993) consider curriculum as “a historical accident” - it has not been deliberately developed to accomplish a clear set of purposes . “Rather it has evolved as a response to the increasing complexities of educational decision-making” (p.7).

The former Department of Education and Science (DES) in the United Kingdom (1980:1) holds the view that “curriculum comprises all the opportunities for learning provided by the school, it includes the formal programmes of lessons in the timetable and the climate of relationships, attitudes, styles of behaviour and the general quality of life established in the school community as a whole”.

Haneveld (1987:99) has it that curriculum has many meanings but, he claims, “it is all the learning which is planned and provided for children at school . . .”.

Van Zyl and Duminy in South Africa (1976) define the curriculum as follows, “It is used to describe a course of study. The curriculum includes the whole study programme to be followed to reach a certain goal.”

A closer look at the above definitions of the curriculum shows important points of divergence and convergence. Some definitions like those of Goodson (1994); Longstreet and Shane (1993) and the DES (1980) have something in common. Besides the fact that they are all non-South African, they define the curriculum very broadly. To them curriculum is that which is planned by the institutions like schools and also that which is not planned but does have an effect on the lives of students in that institution. To them curriculum is seen as overt and covert, planned or unplanned. This is a holistic view of curriculum which covers not only the “official” curriculum of a school but also the “actual” curriculum as well as the “hidden curriculum”.

It is however very unfortunate that the authors of a South African origin like Van Zyl and Duminy (1976), put emphasis mostly on what is planned by the school for learners to learn and do not to consider what learners themselves may experience at school as part of curriculum. To them therefore what is curriculum is planned on paper, overt and may be, “official”. This point was raised by Buckland (1982) in his article where he attacks Tunmer (1981) who he accuses of defining curriculum as a syllabus or even subject packages. Buckland attacks such a view of curriculum as very narrow and technicist. Buckland sees curriculum as including both subjects as they are found in the departmental documents (syllabus) and the experiences that a child comes across in a school.

The way curriculum is defined has some important orientations and beliefs inherent in each and every definition. One’s definition of curriculum tells us about one’s beliefs about curriculum. These beliefs may in-turn have a bearing on how decisions about curriculum may be made.

There is however, very little consensus about what curriculum is in more precise terms. Different definitions of curriculum have been provided by key players in education who represent a diversity of values and experiences and this makes it extremely difficult to get wide public or professional consensus about curriculum.

According to Marsh (1997) most definitions of curriculum at least cover the following aspects :-

- that which is taught at school
- a set of subjects
- content
- a set of materials
- a set of performance objectives
- that which an individual learner experiences as a result of schooling.
- that which is taught both inside and outside of school and directed by the school.
- everything that is planned by school personnel

In this study curriculum will mean all activities that the school undertakes which are aimed at teaching and learning in and outside the classroom in a school.

## 2.2 THE NATURE OF CURRICULUM DECISIONS

According to the International Encyclopedia of education (1985), “curriculum decisions in a school setting include aims and goals of the school curriculum content and materials” (p.1161). Learning experiences could be student activities, or teacher-learner interactions, methods of teaching, resources needed to accomplish goals of the curriculum and assessment of the curriculum to determine how effective or non-effective it has been in accomplishing desired outcomes, aims and goals.

Curriculum decisions are made at a higher (National Level) Middle (Provincial) level and at a lower level (District and School). This study will focus mainly on decisions that are made at the lowest level i.e. the school. The decisions about curriculum at this level include the decisions made by the principal, teachers, pupils, governing body members and the Student Representative Council of learners popularly known as RCL’s in school.

Since there are many definitions of what curriculum is exist, it stands to reason that the scope of what can be referred to as curriculum decisions will, to a large extent, depend on the understanding of what those who make these decisions have about

curriculum. Those who have a broad understanding of curriculum are likely to have a wider scope of what counts as curriculum decisions than those who have a narrow understanding of curriculum. What will be referred to as a curriculum decision to those who think of curriculum as only a syllabus may only be limited to such issues as tests, examinations and methods of teaching. Issues of school policy, school mission statement, goals of the school may be regarded as falling outside of the curriculum decision-making sphere. However, in the case of those with a broader understanding of curriculum, these decisions are more likely to be included.

The scope of curriculum decisions that schools make will also be determined by the decisions that are made at higher levels i.e. at National and Provincial levels of government. Lawton (1983) identifies three levels of curriculum control; viz. national, regional, institutional. A growth in the control of curriculum in one level leads to a reduction of control in the other level. A reduction in one level also leads to a growth in the other level. This can be interpreted to mean that the more there is control of education or curriculum by the National department of education the lesser will there be control left for other levels like the provinces, districts and schools over curriculum and vice versa.

Curriculum decisions are also determined by the values, assumptions and beliefs which determine decision-making in the broader context of education. In South Africa, the trend after 1994 seems to be that more and more decisions about the curriculum will be made at a lower level i.e. the school. The South African School's Act of 1996 gives more and more powers to schools and their governing bodies to govern and manage schools. Evidence of this is also in the new curriculum framework which promotes an Outcomes Based approach to Education which was unveiled in 1997. The new framework reflects a paradigm shift away from the traditional approach to a new participative mode where teachers (especially), are given greater responsibility to structure learning outcomes and create a classroom environment that will be conducive to the acquisition of stated outcomes. This implies that there is to be expected that more and more curriculum decisions will be made at the level of the school than in other levels.

The extent to which this will happen in South Africa is dependent on a number of factors including legislation in education which empowers schools to do so, the ability of those who are expected to make decisions, their willingness to participate in decision-making and the willingness of the participants to share power when making those decisions. There is, however, hope that schools are going to make more decisions in the new era than previously.

### **2.3 PARTICIPATION AND CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING**

As early as 1974, articles on participation were already published abroad. One of these is the article "Whose Schools" which was published by the Open University Press in 1974. The article "whose schools" upheld the view that participation is the key to proper schools development and for all decisions taken in a school. It acknowledged that the views of participants may be different thus, the solution will only be reached if all the participants are given a chance to be heard. It thus advocates, discussion and negotiation between groups-elected representatives, officers, teachers, parents, citizens, voluntary organizations as necessary for the development of legitimate educational and community policies. It shares the feeling that participation through action and reflection, is an educative experience that helps to counter feelings of powerlessness. The article notes parental participation, in particular, by way of governing bodies as empowering.

Many educationists have supported this idea. Schwab, (1983) came out strongly in support of a deliberative approach. Young (1973) , in his paper entitled "An approach to the study of curricula as socially organized knowledge", argued that knowledge is socially generated and constructed. He warned that we should always be suspicious of the sort of "authority" attributed to any sort of expert or educationist as this may be a deliberate use of authority to preserve the status quo and therefore save the expert's prestige. Young also showed that students can have an important part to play in designing curricula. The most dramatic demonstration of this trend has been the demand for the inclusion of Black studies in the curriculum by Negro students in America. In South Africa, it is the refusal of Black students to be taught in Afrikaans which led to the 1976 Soweto riots.

Eggleston (1977) noted some groups and individuals that are likely to impact on curriculum-decisions that schools make. These are relevant to the situation in S.A. today. He points at :-

- (i) The policies of the department itself as the main factor.
- (ii) Publishers of text books for schools can have a very powerful influence as to which books are made available and at what cost. Schools may therefore end up choosing what is on the shelf and not what they would like to have.
- (iii) The members of the Inspectorate (who in our case are called Superintendents of Education Management (SEM) with their supervisory or non-supervisory roles can influence the curricula of a school either way.
- (iv) Teachers as individuals and collectively play an active part in the definition of knowledge in the curriculum.
- (v) Students conformity, non-conformity, etc.
- (vi) Employees, local communities also express their views in the curriculum in a number of ways. Through their willingness or unwillingness to employ pupils who have received different kinds of curriculum and through their willingness to pay fees for alternative curricular than the other curricular found in other schools.

All these groups can thus directly and indirectly impact on the curriculum of a school and can thus be influencing curriculum-decisions and the speed and the manner in which these can be made.

Most studies on participation in curriculum decision-making are unfortunately undertaken outside our borders. Very few have been undertaken in the Republic of South Africa. These include amongst others those undertaken by Glencross, M.

and Fridjhon, (1990) who raise several vital issues regarding the selection of content for a high school mathematics curriculum. In their study they argue that the key question that directs curriculum renewal is “what do we want our pupils to learn?” than the more usual “what do we want to teach?” In their study they offer guidelines for realistic curriculum decision-making in mathematics education at high school level

Gounden and Dayaram (1990) point to a considerable dissatisfaction with the management of educational organisations, particularly schools in South Africa. The study was undertaken in the then Indian Secondary Schools in South Africa where teacher’s views were analysed and the findings confirmed that the current climate in Indian Secondary Schools is not conducive to harmonious and productive teacher participation.

Hanekom (1990) of the University of Stellenbosch undertook a study that is related to this one where he conducted a survey of pupil’s perceptions about teacher’s abilities to teach. Pupils were involved in the evaluation of teachers’ lessons. He concluded with the advice that pupils perceptions could be used to evaluate teachers’ practice (a curriculum decision) but he cautions that the ability of pupils to do these evaluations should not be overestimated because it can hardly be expected of juveniles to judge the didactic situation in absolute details or weigh the relevancy of curriculum content. Hanekom does acknowledge the input that students can make in a curriculum decision-making but, to a limited extent.

In a more recent study by Bischoff and Phakoa (1999) which aimed at establishing the status of minors in the school governing bodies in South African Public Secondary Schools, it is shown that the level of learner involvement in South Africa is higher in comparison to other countries like United Kingdom, Japan and Kenya. South Africa seemed to be ahead in terms of policy and regulations relating to learner participation. In this study learners were very eager to be involved in every kind of decisions that the school makes.

In another study Carl (1987), tried to explore whether decision-making was a myth or reality for South African Teachers. He came to a conclusion that teacher

involvement is not a myth but a reality in South Africa. He noticed teacher involvement particularly at school level and concludes that teacher involvement can in no way be regarded as a myth.

In contrast to Carl's study, Mosoge and van der Westhuizen (1997); Stein and Squelch (1997), respectively explored teacher access to decision-making in schools and teacher participation and empowerment, argue that even as late as 1997, teacher access to decision-making is scanty and very little is done to empower them.

In a study of parental involvement Mzoneli (1991) and Hlatshwayo (1996) in their MEd dissertations (unpublished) respectively, have shown that up to now there has not been any meaningful involvement of parents; in the planning and implementation of educational programmes. Hlatshwayo thus recommends that parents must recommend most of the elements of the school programmes and must become the main source of the school's knowledge and programmes. She states that "parents must be able to participate in the planning and in the decision-making levels that are going to affect them and their children. In this manner parents, teachers and students collectively, will determine what kind of education should be provided for their children and how it will be provided" (p.214).

There seems to be an agreement between most studies that have been recently undertaken, that in South Africa, there is very little participation by most stakeholders in making curriculum decisions. This is further confirmed by Chetty (1998) in her unpublished dissertation where she investigated the manner and extent to which schools are changing in response to policy directives that call for participation of all stakeholders in the management and governance of schools. She found that the shift from a traditional top-down mode of management to a participative and an inclusive mode is very steady and sluggish. She concluded that participation was only a rhetoric because even if most schools did have structures like the governing bodies there is still very little participation in those structures. There is evidence from her findings that some of the stakeholders are not sufficiently involved in the decision-making processes.



This study will therefore be undertaken with the belief that at present, there is still very little research on matters relating to curriculum decision-making in South Africa. The studies that have been undertaken are only a handful and may therefore not be very reliable without further supportive studies being undertaken to prove or refute what these studies have concluded.

## **2.4 FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

The notion of paradigms in education based on the work of Habermas (1972), is outlined by Schubert (1986) and Grundy (1987), and will be used to analyse the participation on curriculum decisions.

Paradigms are defined as “a framework of loosely connected set of ideas, values and rules that govern the conduct of inquiry, the way in which data are interpreted and the way the world may be viewed” (Schubert, 1986, p.170). Schubert cites Thomas Kuhn’s book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), as a book that generated much interest on paradigms by drawing upon data from philosophy, history, psychology and the natural sciences to argue that what happens in science in any era proceeds from a conceptual framework which is called a paradigm or “normal science”. A paradigm could be understood to mean an overriding view point that shapes the ideas and actions of a field or a group. Kuhn referred to these views as “normal science” because if one person were to do/act or view things differently this would be regarded, at least during that time period, as abnormal or somehow divergent to what is generally an accepted pattern and norm of doing things. A change from one paradigm to the next occurs only when it becomes apparent that the “normal science” is no longer adequate to deal with certain categories of problems. It is also at this stage that the structures and rules that guide inquiry will change..

Three periods (paradigms) have been identified in the development of Curriculum inquiry. These are:

- (i) an empirical / analytic paradigm
- (ii) an interpretive / hermeneutic paradigm and
- (iii) a critical paradigm.

These will be analysed in terms of their basic characteristics and their implications for curriculum decision-making.

#### **2.4.1 THE EMPIRICAL - ANALYTIC PARADIGM AND ITS CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IMPLICATIONS**

The empirical paradigm became dominant in the 1940's and the 1950's with Ralph Tyler's (1949) "Objectives model for Curriculum design."

The dominant features of this paradigm are that :-

- It posits principles of control and certainty;
- Operates in the interests of law like propositions that are empirically testable.
- It assumes knowledge to be value-free and objective;
- Accepts unquestioningly that social reality is a given and not socially created; knowledge is created through empirical analytic inquiry and is viewed as a commodity.

An analysis of the features of the empirical-analytic paradigm show that within this school of thought, a narrow view of a curriculum is held and the conception of curriculum is likely to be limited to a syllabus. This should be logical since curriculum is believed to be concrete, observable and quantifiable. In this paradigm, individuals are granted control over others by virtue of their position in bureaucracies. This so because its social organisation is that of work. Every instruction is unquestioningly taken because, workers are there to do a job. Hierarchy is therefore over-emphasized.

A school that predominantly operates in this manner, can be said to operate technically and it is logical that curriculum design in this school will be a matter for

the principal or a few chosen by himself. It follows therefore that more often than not, decision-making will be made by himself; for all levels of decision-making.

Teaching and learning in this paradigm is viewed as a mechanistic process, the teachers have to teach and not to adapt and to adjust to context. Learners too, have to learn in predetermined ways as envisaged by the designer who does not take context into consideration because it is not considered to be important. The aim of teaching is to achieve a particular objective. Teachers who do not meet the predetermined specific objectives of teaching have to be sent to an upgrading course for them to do so.

In this school of thought one may expect to find very little or no negotiation or participation in curriculum decisions. It is very likely that there will be no curriculum groups/committees because after all, the curriculum of a school is thought of as what has always been there, given to the school i.e. in syllabus.

The core curriculum of a school of this kind may therefore not be negotiated and adapted to local contexts

- Much emphasis will be on supervision to make things work efficiently.
- A school of this kind usually relies on examinations and results as it's only yardstick to judge how good or bad it is. Much emphasis will mostly be on good examinations results and teaching for examinations to achieve good results.
- From my experience this usually is a "four walls school" which considers very little or nothing from the community. It also does not allow outside parties to take part in school activities. In this manner, even the parents of learners play a very minimal role in the school.
- Grundy (1987) concludes that a technical paradigm with its aim which is to satisfy technical interests "has a fundamental interest in controlling the environment through rule-following action based upon empirically grounded laws" (p.12). An assertion that she makes is that, inherent in this; is a model of curriculum design like that of Tyler (1949) which is known as the "Rational

objectives model". Such a design had its interests in controlling pupil learning so that, at the end of the teaching process, the product will conform to the intention or ideas as expressed in the original objectives (p.12).

#### **2.4.2 THE INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM AND ITS CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IMPLICATIONS**

The basis of the Interpretive paradigm lies in key concepts like "understanding", "interaction", "deliberation", "judgement"; etc. The paradigm is thus different from the empirical-analytic in the sense that, it emphasizes that action should result from the state of affairs prevailing in a particular situation and experienced by those involved in the situation.

The paradigm thus marks a form of curriculum inquiry where the end of the inquiry come to a particular decision and to make meaning will be after a thorough study of a situation by those who are in a situation, who lived that experience, interacted and then decided on a particular action.

Grundy (1987) notes that "the basic orientation of the technical interest is towards control, but that of a practical interest is towards understanding" (p.310). The kind of understanding that she talks about is not the understanding of technical issues or rules to be followed in an inquiry but it is an interest in understanding the environment so that one is able to interact with it. The practical interest is therefore grounded in the fundamental need of the human species to live in and as part of the world, not to be, as it were, in competition with the environment for survival. The practical interest is an interest in taking justifiable action within a particular environment i.e. "practical action".

The practical or hermeneutic paradigm as it is sometimes called, views reality not merely as the way things appear, rather, as created by communicating among persons (Schubert, 1986). What is of prime importance here is thus not objectively gained knowledge through experimentation but the meanings that participants who are embedded in the situation have gleaned from that situation.

Since understanding and interaction are regarded as key concepts by Grundy (1987), a curriculum informed by a practical interest will not be a means to an end where education outcome is produced through action upon a group of objectified pupils but, it will be regarded as a process of interaction between teachers, pupils and other stakeholders to make meaning of the world. Curriculum decision-making is therefore seen as a process that can be achieved through communication between those who are in, and embedded in the situation. Curriculum decisions will mostly be made and be based on participation and involvement of all stakeholders.

Joseph Schwab (1983) notes that communication, interaction understanding, are the cornerstones of a practical paradigm as well as the vehicles of a curriculum inquiry operating under it. Teachers, learners, subject and milieu interact and continuously influence one another. These he refers to as “the classroom common places”. Schwab wrote extensively on how curriculum could be made more practical and meaningful. In his work : “A language for curriculum” (1969); he advocated a move away from the technical, behaviouristic research paradigm. In 1971 he produced another article “The Practical: Arts of Eclectic”; in which he emphasized the need for practical researchers to have a broad liberal background in as many bodies of theoretical literature as possible. The Practical 3 “Translation into curriculum” (1973) was Schwab’s response to those who claimed that his writings had nothing to do with curriculum. In the Practical 3 he identified the four classroom common places referred to above as the essence of curriculum: teachers, learners, subject matter and milieu. In all his articles he based his argument on the fact that “if one wants to decide and act with greater understanding in a particular situation, one should develop insight by interacting with that situation, which consists of teachers, learners, subject matter and the milieu or the environment (physical, social, economic and psychological aspects” ( cited in Schubert:1986 p.176).

Since the practical paradigm is based on deliberation for choices to be made, a curriculum informed by a practical interest will be deliberated upon and involves as many participants as possible. Interaction between all the stakeholders to arrive at important decisions about curriculum matters is also expected.

A school with authorities that are guided by the tenets of a practical paradigm is likely to be more flexible in terms of its policy formulation. Flexibility results from the fact that the school policy is debated, deliberated and re-evaluated to determine its relevancy to current times and issues. This evaluation is undertaken by the people (stakeholders) who are in the situation (the school) and its locality. The policy formulated is regarded as a proposal for action not a prescription. Grundy (1987), in support of this, notes that the question motivated by a practical interest becomes not 'what can I do?' but 'what ought to be done'? An answer to this will come from how those involved understand the situation. No blueprints.

#### **2.4.3 THE CRITICAL PARADIGM AND ITS CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IMPLICATIONS**

The paradigm of critical theorizing has its roots in existentialism, phenomenology, critical theory and personal theorizing. It became more and more observable in the mid-70's through the writings of William Pinar (1974,1975); Mazza (1982); Giroux, and Pinar (1981) who became known as the reconceptualists (as cited in Schubert, 1986).

The basis of all the reconceptualists or critical theorists is their emphasis on a blending of action and inquiry. This they refer to as "praxis". They believe in the total emancipation of an individual. Persons who are really emancipated are those that are able to perceive reality in multiple-perspectives. The central point here is that people should be free to recognize constraints which may hinder them from reaching the higher levels of consciousness. The higher levels consciousness represent true emancipation.

They believe in the organic view of nature so that human beings are seen as part of and embedded in nature.

Individuals are believed to be the creators of knowledge and culture because humans interact with the environment, derive knowledge from it, and use that knowledge to contribute to a cultural milieu.

Experience is basic to their method of inquiry. They argue, therefore, that any inquiry should rely on the experience. At the same time, they examine and explicate value systems and concepts of justice upon which an inquiry is based.

This paradigm seeks to expose that which is oppressive and dominating. It makes distorted conceptions and unjust values problematic.

The advocates of a critical paradigm go beyond the practical paradigm by putting more emphasis on emancipatory political interests. The claim they make is that the search for meaning and virtue can only be possible if it is accompanied by a social organization that empowers human beings to overcome constraints that are imposed by socio-economic class and its controlling ideas. The critical praxis combines inquiry and action in an attempt to expose that which is oppressive and dominating. They label the empirical-analytic paradigm as value-laden, its adherents however do not realize this. They further criticise the hermeneutic sciences for not incorporating sufficient political action.

A curriculum informed by a critical interest will be developed or designed in a joint and negotiated effort. All decisions will therefore be made together. Learners, teachers as well as parents will be included in the decision-making process. This will be the case because the critical interest believes in active participation, making learning experience meaningful and in learning that has a critical focus. It despises the casting of participants, like students in particular, into a role of passive recipients of the educational experience.

A curriculum informed by a critical interest is characterized by problem-posing in its content and approach rather than programs that come with answers expected from students. Critical pedagogy goes beyond situating the learning experience within the learner experience, it is a process which takes the experiences of both the learner and the teacher through dialogue and negotiation, recognizes them both as problematic (Freire: 1970). A curriculum decision-maker informed by a critical interests will not prescribe what students should do, but will, right at the beginning, ask what would students like to know or study?, and the answer to this will come from negotiations with the students.

A curriculum informed by the emancipatory interest is based on what Grundy (1987) calls “Praxis” (p.114). “Praxis” is the act which is emancipatory in nature and its constitutive elements are action and reflection. Praxis is reflexive in the sense that each of the above mentioned elements builds upon the other, in a dialectic manner. The development of a curriculum informed by an emancipating interest is therefore problematical, and it requires reflection and risk-taking actions by participants rather than academic pronouncements.

Freire (1972) in his book, Pedagogy of the oppressed, developed a concept of “banking education” to refer to a kind of education that sees students as vessels in which knowledge is deposited by teachers. Banking education in this context is typical of a technical paradigm explained previously. This type of education is directly in contrast to what Freire proposes should happen in teaching and education in schools. The relationship that Freire proposes is the one where a teacher and a student both look at a problem and negotiate as to how they are going to solve it. This type of relationship he calls the problem-posing and solving method. He points out that the problem-solving education is revolutionary, prophetic and as such hopeful and so corresponds to the historic nature of man.

Such is the thinking within a critical paradigm where relations are re-defined and problems solved from a multiple of angles, unlike in the empirical paradigm earlier. Inherent in this type of thinking is that the teacher teaches and learns from students; which means that students too contribute to the learning process. The teacher talks with students. Students do not only learn what the teacher chooses, for they choose content too. The teacher therefore does not have total control over the conformist learners. Curriculum decision-making will therefore be a joint undertaking between teachers and students. In this, parents too have a very big role to play in curriculum decision-making.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study was to find out what are considered to be curriculum decisions, who makes curriculum decisions and how the process of curriculum decision-making takes place in the two secondary schools which were selected. The study is therefore descriptive and aim to establish the extent of participation by stakeholders in curriculum decision-making in the two secondary schools.

This study was undertaken within the context of a policy commitment to a participative approach to what should happen during the curriculum decision-making process in schools. This is emphasised in most recent policy documents like the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996.

The study attempted to find out whether what these documents propose has been implemented or not. The study aims at making us aware of what curriculum decisions do the different stakeholders in the schools participate in. This in turn will help us to establish the extent to which each one contributes to the process of making decisions about curriculum in the school.

The researcher aimed to gather data using two instruments which were believed to be the most appropriate instruments taking into consideration time, expense and most importantly, the potential reliability of these instruments. It is for this reason, that a written questionnaire and a semi-structured interview was used. In this chapter an account will be made as to why a particular method of gathering data was used in one setting and not in the other. Also, the sampling techniques used will be accounted for.

### **3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE**

The study was conducted in two secondary schools from Amanzimtoti Circuit. This Circuit is part of the Durban South Region of the KwaZulu-Natal Province in the Republic of South Africa.

The Circuit has nine (9) secondary schools, and out of this nine, some secondary schools have previously been under the ex-Natal Education Department whilst others belonged to the ex-KwaZulu Government Department of Education and Culture. Both Departments of Education were amalgamated into one KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture when the new democratically elected government came into power in 1994.

All public schools in the province presently operate under one regulation, the South African Schools' Act No.84 of 1996 (SASA). This Act advocates a new approach to school governance. It requires that all schools be governed in a democratic and inclusive manner so that all stakeholders in a school are to have a say in decisions that are made in a school. Stakeholders in a school include, amongst others, parents of learners, educators, learners, members of the community, the business community, religious leaders, etc. The focus of this study was to investigate the extent to which stakeholders participate in curriculum decision-making in the two secondary schools.

The study was conducted simultaneously in the two secondary schools with an intention to compare the extent to which the respondents in each one of the two schools have progressed towards a participative approach that the South African Schools' Act espouses.

The two secondary schools that are studied have different backgrounds that need to be explained. One secondary school was randomly selected from a group of 3 secondary schools that previously belonged to the ex-Natal Education Department.

The schools in this group were formerly known as the State-aided or model C schools. These schools had a predominantly White learner enrolment.

According to Looock and Grobler (1997) all model C schools had already incorporated the internationally accepted principles of greater democratisation and community involvement into school management in the form of governing bodies by August 1992. All other schools especially those that were under the ex-KwaZulu Government Department of Education and Culture did not have such a structure until after 1994.

The other secondary school was also randomly sampled from schools that previously belonged to the ex-KwaZulu Government Department of Education and Culture. Secondary schools in this group had a predominantly Black learner enrolment and were very much disadvantaged compared to the model C schools especially when it came to material resources.

According to a report on the Financing of Education in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1983) published by the former Department of National Education (1994)”, backlogs in schools resulted from underfunding of especially, the departments that offered school education to Africans”, of which the ex-KwaZulu Government Department of Education and Culture was one

There is thus a remarkable difference between the past history of the two selected secondary schools. It thus becomes very imperative to investigate whether their past histories do impact on their curriculum decision-making procedures now or not.

### **3.3 THE SAMPLE AND ITS DESIGN**

The study focused on what, by whom and how decisions are being made in the two secondary schools that formed part of the sample.

The researcher knew that decision-making in South Africa has traditionally been linked to post levels in schools and for this reason the researcher thought that a stratified random sample would be a more representative sample of all levels or strata that exist in secondary schools. According to Judd, et al (1991), in a stratified sample the population is divided into two or more strata based on one or

more criteria. Stoker (1983) insists that a stratified random sample is suitable for a heterogeneous population (like that of a school) because in each strata the population gets representation.

For this study, a random sample was drawn from each of the post levels (strata) in each of the two secondary schools. In a case where only one person occupied that post level, that person automatically became part of the sample. This was the case with principals, deputies, chairpersons of the school governing bodies and learners who were members of the school governing bodies.

The sample was planned to be as follows :-

2 Secondary schools selected from Amanzimtoti Circuit.

Within each school :-

- 1 Principal
- 1 Deputy Principal
- 1 Head of Department randomly selected
- 2 Educators randomly selected.
- 1 Chairperson of the school governing body
- 2 Learners that serve in the school governing body

The total sample per school was thus initially planned to be 8 persons which meant that a total of 16 persons were to be part of the sample for the two schools.

A sample such as this one became a problem though because, it became extremely difficult to contact and interview all of the people who were to be part of the sample as stated above.

In School A, the Deputy Principal had just retired on a voluntary severance package, and had not yet been replaced. The only head of department that was there could not be part of the study for a reason that was not very clearly explained to the researcher. The purpose of the study had been explained to him but, he was very reluctant to be part of it. The Deputy and the Head of department were thus

replaced by the two most senior teachers in the school.

The other problem was that of the chairpersons of the governing bodies of both schools. It became impossible to get hold of the chairpersons because of the work that each one of them did and their places of residence which coincidentally were too far from that of the researcher's, to reach after hours.

The difficulty experienced in contacting the chairpersons of the school governing bodies was overcome by the researcher attending the meeting of parents in School B; and interviewing parents in both schools. Three parents were interviewed in School A and two in School B.

In the meeting of parents in School B, I observed what went on and had a chance to talk to some of the parents after the meeting. The parents I talked to were however not members of the school governing body as initially planned. Talking to parents themselves and attending a parents' meeting was considered as providing a clearer picture of the willingness of parents to participate in curriculum decision-making in the schools selected. A total of 3 parents were interviewed in School A and 2 in School B.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

A written questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used as research instruments. Amongst other reasons for using the two methods together was to ensure that, a situation or problem at hand is approached from different angles. Indeed Burgess (1993:143) notes that "a strict and a rigid adherence to any (one) method, technique or doctrinaire position, may become like a confinement in a cage". This is the situation that the researcher did not want to find himself in.

The other reason why the researcher used mixed strategies was to overcome a problem of illiteracy which is still rife in some of the South African communities especially those that are Black.

### 3.4.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A written questionnaire was one of the methods used to gather data for this study. Kidder & Judd (1986) acknowledge the advantages of using a questionnaire as :-

- It is cost effective
- Respondents answer in relaxed atmosphere, taking their time and this leads to well thought responses.
- Bias which may result from the presence of the interviewer or other respondents is easy to overcome since respondents respond privately.
- Confidentiality is easily honoured.

The researcher thus thought that using a questionnaire would be the most efficient way to gather data.

However a written questionnaire was administered personally to the Principals, Deputies, Heads of Departments and Educators. This was done to honour the above mentioned advantages as well as the fact that time constraints at the time did not allow the researcher to physically get hold of educators easily. It was time for final examinations in the province and most educators at this time were invigilating.

The other reason was that the researcher thought that a written questionnaire will not be much of a problem for educators since on their part they can read and write and hopefully have some understanding about curriculum as a concept. But questionnaires for the parents and the learners might be a nightmare. For this reason the researcher would administer interviews personally with them.

To curb any possible low response rate, it was intended that a written questionnaire would be personally delivered by the researcher himself and after striking an agreement with the participants they would be collected on an agreed upon date.

The questionnaires taken to both schools were exactly the same to enable a comparison of the responses.

The questionnaire had 29 items all of which focused on participation in curriculum decision-making by various stakeholders in two secondary schools. (Refer to appendix). Questions were generated from the literature that is relevant to the topic under study as well as from the experience of the researcher on this topic.

The items in the questionnaire were constructed with respect to the following:-

- The general understanding of the concept curriculum by the respondents.
- The extent of participation by the respondents in curriculum decision-making.
- Their attitude about participation in curriculum issues in their school i.e. who should make a curriculum decisions and how.
- Their opinions on how participation can be enhanced.

The questionnaire had both closed and open-ended questions. It was believed that the open-ended questions would allow respondents to answer and frame answers in their own way. This would allow the researcher to tap the respondents' thinking and knowledge which the close-ended questions might not have covered or were unable to do.

Questionnaires were accompanied by a covering letter which introduced the researcher and explained the intentions of the study. It also gave the assurance to all respondents that the information they were to give would be confidential. Each questionnaire was thus accompanied by an envelop which was used by respondents to seal the information that had been given. The sealed envelopes were personally collected by the researcher from every respondent to a questionnaire.

### **3.4.2 INTERVIEWS**

A semi-structured interview was also used to gather data for this study.

This interview was conducted on all those that were to be part of this study including some of the educators that had previously filled the questionnaire.

Themes (questions) in the semi-structured interview were basically the same as the ones that were used for the written questionnaire. This was because the interview was intended for almost similar questions. The only difference was that it was verbal and was mainly to elicit responses from parents and learners who formed part of this study.

- The semi-structured interview also aimed, at least on the part of educators, to seek further clarity on some of the responses that the educators had responded on.

Gordon (1980) suggests that it is advisable for a researcher to use this type of interview if he/she knows what he/she wants to know but, still wants to leave some room for exploration as the interview proceeds. The schedule requires a bit of structure, but without requiring administration of the questions as precisely as it would be done in a structured interview. The semi-structured interview was thus somehow flexible and yet did stick to questions that the researcher carried with him.

A semi-structured interview was conducted individually with each interviewee. In it, the interviewer carried themes or topics which were related to the agenda the researcher wanted to investigate. A semi-structured interview did not have questions that are to be asked in a specific style but, a set of topics and themes around which the interviewee was expected to respond in his/her own way.

Corbin (1971) notes that the questions in such an interview merely indicate the kinds of topics and themes that might be covered rather than the actual questions that will be used. Topics and themes for the semi-structured interview used are included in appendix 5. Burgess (1993) refers to such themes as the aide memoire; which only serves as a guide to the researcher.

### **3.5 PILOTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULES**

The instruments used in this study were piloted or pre-tested in a school which was known to the researcher and to which he had easy access. This was done with the aim of revealing any unforeseen difficulties that the instruments might pose to the



respondents before one got to the actual scenario.

Yin (1989) notes how important it is for a researcher to pilot the instruments to be used in a study before going to the actual scenario. He put emphasis on the piloting of the study since piloting a study helps the researcher in the final preparation plans for data collection. "It helps the investigator to refine his/her data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed" (p.80).

The respondents that formed part of a pre-test sample were from one secondary school and were selected by the researcher with the help of the principal of a pilot secondary school. The pre-test sample was as follows:-

1	1. Deputy Principal
2	2. Post level 1 educators
2	2. Grade 12 learners
1	1. Parent who was a member of the school governing body.

All of the respondents were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule.

There seemed to be no major problems with the wording and language used in the questionnaire and in the interview schedule itself which meant that they were to be left as they were. One thing that emerged however, is that one has to be very cautious especially when trying to gain access to a school and when conducting an interview.

In the process of trying to gain access into the school, the principal of the pilot school showed some signs of scaredness about the study. To him it sounded and looked as if the researcher was coming to inspect him on how he does things in his school and may be to expose him.

The researcher then, took this point very carefully and explained the aim of the study, intentions and how it will help him and other principals as well as the researcher. One therefore needs to gain the confidence of those who are responsible

for the institution before a study of this kind can be undertaken successfully.

Of great help to me was the fact that, as acting principal in my school I shared a similar professional status with him and it became (a little) easy for me because he had seen and knew me and we had talked about the problems in our schools and how we could solve them.

It also became clear to me that the language that must be used during the process of an interview must be a simple and a straight forward. This was a case especially for students and parents who were members of the governing body. These may have never seen or even heard of the concept curriculum. One therefore needed to use a round about way of expressing what the concept meant and what might be a curriculum decision in a school by using practical examples.

### **3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was undertaken in two secondary schools and the circuit itself consists of nine secondary schools. This meant that one could not generalize from the findings of only two schools to all other schools in the circuit or even the district or a region. Nor was it the intention of this study to offer generalised results. The aim was rather to find out how each of the selected schools make curriculum decisions, what these are and who participates during the curriculum decision making process. This will indirectly tell us the extent to which participative decision-making has been established in the school as well as the difficulties experienced and the possible solutions.

The two schools were therefore used as only two cases out of many that may differ to a considerable extent but, it is believed that there could be similar cases of schools where the conditions will be the same as those of this sample, in which case, other schools can therefore use findings to their advantage. This is said because the researcher believes that a lot can be learnt by other schools, distant or local, from the findings that will come from the two schools. There could be similar cases somewhere where a solution to a similar problem has not yet been found.

The language used for the questionnaire and the interview was in English. This meant that the researcher had to deviate from this language from time to time because of a number of reasons. For some of the respondents in one school, English was not their first language, so that during the interview process, the researcher was bound to explain some of the concepts in the first language of the interviewees.

Also, the concept of curriculum itself had different understandings and meanings to different people so that from time to time, one had to re-visit the actual meaning of the concept for clarity to the respondents. To do this in more than one language sometimes presented difficulties.

Despite the above mentioned limitations, the researcher was convinced that the benefits of undertaking the study would far outweighed the limitations.

### **3.7 PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE THE STUDY**

If a questionnaire is to be used in a school or in a public institution, it is advisable for the researcher to seek the approval of the principal of that institution. Accordingly, a letter was written (appendix 3 ) and was addressed to the Principals and the Chairpersons of both schools to seek permission to undertake the study. Permission was granted to the researcher on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1999. The permission granted was verbally.

Another letter dated 15 October 1999 was also addressed to the Superintendent of Education Management of Amanzimtoti Circuit. The study was explained to him and he responded positively in a letter dated 10 November 1999 (appendix 2).

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher will not disclose any confidential piece of information about the selected schools. To ensure this no real names of schools would be mentioned in the report. The schools were to be referred to as School A and School B only.

A letter guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity of the participants accompanied each and every questionnaire for educators. On the side of the members of the governing body and learners, such guarantees were to be verbally expressed before each interview session.

In a letter addressed to the Principals and Chairpersons of the school governing bodies of the two schools, it was stated that they may, if they wish to, ask for a copy of the research report on completion.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study was undertaken with an aim of finding out what curriculum decisions are made and who makes these in two secondary schools at Amanzimtoti circuit situated under the Durban South Region in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

The research was conducted successfully but, not without problems.

- The researcher succeeded in gaining access into schools despite the problems of timing of administering of the questionnaire and of conducting interviews. The timing problem arose because, the researcher conducted the interviews and administered the questionnaires when it was the time that the final (year-end) examinations had just begun in secondary schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. At this time, principals were initially hesitant to grant permission because they wanted to give undivided attention to the examinations proceedings. After the researcher had explained that this was the only time that was available to him, permission was granted.
- Completion and return of all questionnaires in School B took only three days and about eight days in School A.
- Follow-up interviews were held with the Principals of both schools as well as with the educators that had filled the questionnaire.
- The researcher also succeeded in conducting interviews with two learners from each school and these were members of the school governing bodies.
- It was however impossible to get hold of the chairpersons of both governing bodies for the two schools. This was due to the nature of the work that each one of them did and their places of residence which coincidentally were too far from the researcher's, to reach after hours. The researcher thus attended parent's

meetings where he observed the meetings and later interviewed three parents from school A and two parents from school B on separate occasions.

Data for this study has been obtained through verbal and non-verbal responses. Data from educators was mainly obtained using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, but data from parents and learners was obtained through interviews only.

Since the study is descriptive and analytical in its nature, both the frequency tables constructed from written questionnaires and the recorded verbal responses from interviews have been simultaneously used. This helps to confirm, complement or to pick-up contradictions from the respondent's responses. Where possible, the findings are corroborated by evidence from other research studies conducted locally and abroad.

#### **4.2 PERSONAL PARTICULARS OF RESPONDENTS (EDUCATORS)**

Educator participants' personal particulars with respect to the respondent's rank, gender, educational qualifications and their teaching experience in years was as follows:-

Using a stratified random sample, five educator respondents were part of the sample from each of the two schools. In school A three of the respondents were males and 2 were females. In School B 2 were males whilst 3 were females. Educators sampled from both schools were qualified with either a diploma only or a diploma plus a degree. The experience of educators in both schools ranged from 1 to 3 years, 4 to 5 years as well as 6 years and above. Only one educator in School B had teaching experience of 1-3 years others were more experienced. School B had 4 of the 5 respondents with an experience of 6 years and above. With educators having a long experience in each of the two schools one would normally expect to get a much needed information because they have a long service with the department and could thus be more knowledgeable about the school where they are and professional issues in general.

### 4.3 CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOLS A AND B

The following data and its analysis is in respect of educator's participation in curriculum decision making in their schools.

**Table 1 : The respondent's general understanding of the concept curriculum in the two schools . (Item No.5 of the questionnaire)**

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
CURRICULUM DEFINITIONS	NUMBER	NUMBER
A syllabus	0	1
A syllabus plus all that the school does to make learning possible	5	4

The general understanding of the concept curriculum to respondent educators from the two schools can be associated with a broad definition of curriculum. In School A educators who were part of the study indicated that their acceptable definition of curriculum is that of "a syllabus plus all that the school does to make learning possible." In School B, 4 went with the same idea with only one subscribing to a narrow definition of curriculum which definition limits curriculum to a syllabus. This means that nearly all educators who participated in this study are likely to have a wider scope of what could be regarded as curriculum decisions in their schools. This could also be interpreted to mean that the respondent educators in the two schools, given a chance and if willing to participate in curriculum decision making, could be expecting to do more than just making decisions which are limited to a classroom level but, to participate in more and more higher level decisions which may include decisions that pertain to matters of policy in their schools.

**Table 2 : Participation in curriculum decision-making by Principal, Deputy, H.O.D. and respondent from educators Schools A and B**

SCHOOL-A					SCHOOL-B			
Curriculum Decisions	Principal	Deputy	H.O.D.	Educator	Principal	Deputy	H.O.D.	Educator
2.1 Choice subjects to be taught. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	1 3	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.2 Choice of teaching methods. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	3 1	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.3 Choice of content to be taught. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	3 1	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.4 Time allocation on the composite time-table YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	4 1	1 -	1 -	1 -	1 1
2.5 Deciding on “extra curricular” activities. YES NO	1 -	- -	3 -	1 -	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.6 Selection of texts to be used. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	4 -	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.7 Deciding on which educator to teach which subjects. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	2 2	1 -	1 -	1 -	1 1
2.8 Planning the school programme for the year. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	2 2	1 -	1 -	1 -	1 1
2.9 Teaching aids to be used during teaching. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	1 3	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -



SCHOOL-A					SCHOOL-B			
Curriculum Decisions	Principal	Deputy	H.O.D.	Educator	Principal	Deputy	H.O.D.	Educator
2.10 Assessment policy and procedures. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	3 1	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.11 Foundation of school policy. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	1 3	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.12 Formulation of the School's Mission Statement. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	1 3	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.13 Learner code of conduct. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	1 3	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.14 Educator code of conduct. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	- 4	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.15 Classroom seating arrangements. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	4 -	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.16 Religious policy of the school. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	1 3	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.17 Language policy. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	3 1	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -
2.18 Admission policy. YES NO	1 -	- -	- -	1 3	1 -	1 -	1 -	2 -

#### **4.3.1 PRINCIPALS' PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION- MAKING IN SCHOOLS A AND B**

Table 2 above shows that the principals of both schools participate in all curriculum decision-making activities in the list given. This was confirmed in the interviews that were later held with them. The reason given for this was that it is by virtue of their positions that they must see to everything that happens in the school. The other reason could be that principals must lead from the front.

The table shows that School A had neither a deputy nor a head of department as School B had. The deputy and the head of department in School B participated in almost all of the curriculum decisions that are listed.

The table however shows that the deputy in School B does not take part in the decisions about the educator code of conduct as well as the classroom seating arrangements.

Even though it was not easy to compare the two schools because School A has no deputy and the head of department as School B had, one thing became clear; both schools have principals who are part of every curriculum decision-making process in their schools.

#### **4.3.2 EDUCATORS' PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION- MAKING IN SCHOOLS A AND B**

The table further shows that educators who were part of this study in both schools participate in activities such as:-

- Drawing the composite time table of the school.
- Selection of text books that are used for teaching by the school.
- Selection of materials to be used as teaching aids.
- Deciding on the educators' code of conduct.
- and deciding on the classrooms' seating arrangements.

All educators who were part of the sample indicated that they do make decisions

pertaining to the above.

In School A 3 respondents indicated that they participate and, only one respondent indicated that he does not participate in the following activities:

- Choice of teaching methods.
- Choosing content of what is to be taught.
- Deciding on “extra curricular activities” of the school.
- Assessment policy and procedures.
- As well as deciding on the core-curricular activities of the school.

For the following activities however, this turned to be the exact opposite. Only one respondent from School A indicated that he participates whilst the other three indicated that they do not. These activities are:-

- Choice of subjects to be taught.
- Formulation of the general school policy.
- Formulation of the school’s mission statement.
- Deciding on the learner code of conduct.
- Religious policy of the school.
- as well as the admission policy of the school.

For other activities like deciding on which educator to teach which subject and the planning of the school’s programme for the year, the respondents had equally mixed responses as half of them agreed to be taking part whilst the other half disagreed to this. Mixed responses about participation or non-participation in the decisions about which educator is to teach which subject in School A may indicate a lack of knowledge about which educators are delegated to make such decisions and also that, may be, the way in which those that are delegated to do this is not known to some of the educators.

The respondents in school B indicated their full participation in all of the curriculum decisions that are listed in the table. They only had mixed responses when it came to issues such as:

- time allocation on the composite time table;

- deciding on which educator is to teach which subject,
- and the planning of the school programme for the year.

In these, 2 of the respondents from School B indicated that they are involved whilst the other 3 indicated that they are not.

Participation in curriculum decision-making by respondents seems to be evident in both School A and School B. However this is even more clearer in School B than in A where for most decision-making processes, respondents have indicated their full participation.

What one learns from the above sample of respondents is that there is no activity in the list given where the sampled educators take no part or are totally not involved. One can therefore say that educators that are part of this sample, participate in most of the activities about curriculum issues in both schools. This however happens to a more or lesser degree in one school than the other.

If one were to use the number of instances where these educators indicated that they take part in curriculum decision-making activities at a particular school, one could come to a conclusion about the respondents of School A and B. More respondent educators in School B indicated their involvement in curriculum decision-making than those in School A. In a follow-up interview that I had with individual educators later, educators indicated the extent to which they are involved in the curriculum activities of their schools or not. Their responses confirmed what they had indicated on the questionnaire earlier.

When the selected educators in School A were asked as to whether they were willing to participate in more curriculum decision-making processes than they presently are, they stated that they were more than willing to do so. This could be linked to their responses on table 4 of the questionnaire. This is where they strongly agreed that they must participate when curriculum decisions are made in their school.

**Table 3 : Respondent Educator's opinions on who should make curriculum decisions in their schools. (Item No.7 on the questionnaire)**

PARTICIPANTS IN CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOLS A & B	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
	NO INFAVOUR OF	NO INFAVOUR OF
3.1 Principal	5	5
3.2 Deputy	4	5
3.3 Head of Department	4	5
3.4 Educators	4	5
3.5 Parents of Learners	2	3
3.6 Learners	2	3
3.7 SEMs	3	0
3.8 Educational Officials	4	2

The principal is first in the list in both Secondary schools. In School A, the Deputy, Head of Department, Educators and the Provincial Department of Education are ranked second. The third place is seen as fit for the Superintendent of Education Management whilst the last position is shared among parents and learners.

Such an opinion means that the respondent educators in School A think that parents, and Education officials as well as learners, should play a minimal role and the major part is to be played by the principal in close co-operation with the Deputy, the Head of Department and themselves.

This was confirmed in the interview held with individual educators in School A. The educators of School A voiced their concerns about the ability of parents and students to play a major part in curriculum decision-making. Their fears emanated from the following:-

- Most parents in the school are said to be illiterate and can therefore not read or

write whilst most departmental documents and circulars are written in English. To educators this illiteracy problem means that in each and every meeting they, as teachers, must serve as interpreters and parents, in most cases, end up as listeners or observers. In School A, participation for parents as well as learners end up meaning mere presence in governing body meetings and not full involvement or participation.

- Another concern was the fact that only a few parents attend meetings when invited. This happens despite the fact that most of the departmental circulars are discussed and decisions made in these meetings. Their non-attendance sometimes is interpreted to mean lack of interest by educators. This results from the fact that despite a number of invitations that are extended to them, only or handful of them attend these meetings.
- Major changes and contributions in School A's progress have mostly been pioneered by educators without parental participation. These range from the introduction of new subjects in the school's curriculum like Mathematics, to discipline and to minor issues like deciding on which sporting codes are to be introduced or excluded in the school's curriculum package.

In contrast to what the respondent educators in School A think about who should be part of the curriculum decision-making process, learners interviewed in School A seemed very willing to participate and were prepared to do so provided they got the assistance from the principal and educators. This need for assistance on the side of learners arose out of the doubt that they had about their ability to make some of the curriculum decisions in their school.

One can conclude therefore, that in school A, the respondent educators have little confidence over the capacity of parents and learners to make curriculum decisions. They think that such an ability lies in the principal and themselves. It also seems as if the respondent educators in School A need the assistance of the Superintendent of Education Management (S.E.Ms) more than they need the assistance of parents and learners.

In School B on the other hand, the educator respondents thought that there should be full and equal involvement of the principal, deputy, Head of Department and themselves (educators) in the curriculum decision-making process of their school. Parents and learners are ranked second in the preference list followed by education officials such as (examiners, curriculum designers in the regional office and provincial offices, etc.). The S.E.Ms are not included in their list at all. This can be interpreted to mean that the respondents in school B prefer to see the Principal, Deputy, the Heads of Department and Educators getting an equal share of the curriculum decision-making processes. After these the learners and parents must take part, but, not as much as the Principal, Deputy, Head of Department and Educators.

They think that educational officials should play a minimal role in the curriculum activities of their school. These activities should be limited to issues like deciding on the yearly examination times and promotion procedures for particular grades and the length of the school day and the payment of teacher's salaries and not on the day to day curriculum decision-making processes of the school.

As for the S.E.Ms the respondents in School B saw no particular role for them. One respondent stated that he did not understand their role in the school except to deliver departmental circulars. The respondent felt that S.E.Ms did not have any interest in school matters and did not understand their school's culture.

One respondent from School B felt that the parents, learners, S.E.Ms and the department officials should not have finality on matters that are decided in their school, but they can make input into the discussions before decisions are finally made by educators (including Principal, Deputy and H.O.Ds).

In an interview held with learners in School B, they were asked whether they would like to take part in the activities in which they presently do not take part in. The two learners responded by saying that they would like to, but they do not have enough time to participate in any more other activities since their involvement coupled with the classwork could be unbearable.

On the aspect of who should take part in curriculum decision-making in the school, respondents in both schools favour an inclusive approach where important stakeholders are to be involved. This inclusiveness however differs when these stakeholders are ranked in order of preference by educators. In both schools the sampled educators put themselves first and they saw themselves as being in the forefront of development in their schools.

What is remarkable is the position that the respondent educators think parents and learners should occupy in the two schools. In School A parents and learners are ranked last whilst in School B parents and learners occupy the second position after the educators. This can be interpreted to mean that the respondent educators in School B find parents and learners to be more helpful, co-operative or better capable of making curriculum decisions than those of School A.

The other remarkable difference between the respondents from the two schools is the position that is assigned by educators to the S.E.Ms and the education officials that serve in the regional and provincial offices. The table shows that the respondents in School A think that the S.E.Ms must be involved in the curriculum decision-making process of their school. In School B however, this is not the case.

Learners respondents from both schools do like to be part of the curriculum decision-making process and structures but, they have reservations about some of the decisions because they doubt their ability when it comes to some of the curriculum decisions.



**Table 4 : The extent to which educators agreed or disagreed with their participation in curriculum decision-making , (Item No.8 and 9 of the questionnaire).**

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
RESPONSES	NUMBER	NUMBER
4.1 Strongly agree	4	4
4.2 Agree	1	1
4.3 Strongly disagree	-	-
4.4 Disagree	-	-

The table shows that similar results were obtained since all of respondents in both schools strongly agreed or just agreed that educators should be included whenever a curriculum decision is made.

This means that educators who were part of this study are for participation, eager to do so but, as we have seen in table 1 above, are not part of every decision that is made in both schools. That educators are not part of every decision that is made in these schools can be ascribed to a number of reasons.

Some of the reasons given by respondent educators in School A were the following:-

- The respondents complained that high work loads and time constraints made it absolutely impossible for meetings to be timeously held which meetings are a forum where they can discuss issues and come to decisions. This makes them reluctant to physically engage in every decision-making process discuss everything rather, they leave this to the principal to decide on some of the issues himself and can consult them afterwards.
- Some of the educators indicated that they really did not know much about some issues like time tabling and planning the school's programme for the year as these were not part of their formal training programme as teachers.

- Besides these hinderances, the respondents in School A felt that “educators are the ones that make it work” for education. They believe in decisions that they become part of, and they feel that they are the most important of all the stakeholders in education.
- The respondents in School B gave the following reasons for their inclusion in the curriculum decision-making processes. They feel that they are the ones who teach the learners and they are the ones that communicate with learners. This can be interpreted to mean that they know the education situation better than any body else and therefore consider themselves to be the best to make a decision about that situation. This was interestingly stated by one respondents, “we (educators) are the people at the chalkface.”
- One respondent educator in School B argued that in order to like what they teach, they must be part of the decisions about what they are to teach.
- They thought that including educators in decision-making will empower educators.
- They believed that they are an integral part of the education process and therefore deserve to be involved.

It is clear from the above that educators who formed part of this study want to be involved and to participate in the curriculum decision-making process, but there are constraints to this. It seems that respondent educators in both schools are determined to be part of the decision-making process but, this seems not feasible. In an individual interview with some of them, they pointed out that the process of the rationalisation and redeployment that is presently taking place in the province has left them with bigger work loads than before and there is now little time left for “other things” except teachign in the classroom.

In an interview that was held with some of the educators later, it became clear that most educators show willingness to be involved in an issue that directly affects

them. So that most educators would openly show interest in matters that directly affects them in the classroom than in matters that pertain to the general school policy. It also came out clear that some of these educators believe that matters of general school policy are a matter for the principal and his management team. This is not surprising since, before the present era, curriculum decision-making has always been a matter for the principal alone or a principal and the management in the school.

**Table 5 : The respondent educators' views on the existence of opportunities for curriculum decision-making in their schools. (Item No.10 and 11 of the questionnaire).**

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
RESPONSE	NUMBER	NUMBER
Yes	4	5
No	1	0
TOTAL	5	5

The majority of the respondent educators in both School A and School B indicated that opportunities for participation existed in their schools.

In both schools they pointed to the existence of the present legislation as forming the foundation for working together as a starting point. In this regard the existence of governing bodies provided a foundation upon which all participation and deliberation about issues relating to curriculum of the school can be based.

- In School A volley ball, Mathematics to be taught in all classes was their initiative and in School B computer studies was to replace typing and a number sport-activities is an educator's initiative.

In School A, however, one respondent pointed out that no such opportunities exist since all that they do is dictated upon them by the principal.

What is clear though is that the majority of educators sampled from both schools believe that opportunities for participation are very great and they give the following reasons :-

- They are given a chance to air their views in staff meetings.
- Their principals listen and in most cases take their suggestions.
- They themselves have initiated some projects and introduced some subjects which proves that their inputs are given a chance.
- They mentioned the spirit of working together between them and their principals as good and does enhance participation.

Learner respondents from School A had the same feeling as their educators about the existence of opportunities for participation. Learners stated that the opportunity for participation among stakeholders does exist in their schools. They pointed out that the principal stands out to be a very insightful and a hardworking person. The suggestions that they, as learners, make are usually welcomed and heeded most of the time.

They also pointed out that the existence of the School Governing Body as a forum that has all representatives is proof that opportunities for working together do actually exist.

Members of the RCL in School A came up with an idea of a suggestion box-wherein those who have suggestions and views can write and drop a piece of paper with suggestions into the box. This box is available to learners, teachers and parents of learners. It serves as a form of communication of ideas between the stakeholders in the school.

Learner respondents from School B felt that opportunities do exist in their school as well. They are part of the governing body which makes important decisions in the school and they are also represented in the Management Committee of the school. This is a structure that makes the most important decisions about the school curriculum and about the day to day running of the school.

What is clear from the above discussion is that in both schools the hopes about opportunities for curriculum decision-making and participation by all stakeholders are alive since all respondents believe that the future for inclusive curriculum decision-making is promising.

**Table 6 : Educator responses views on whether or not they are consulted in curriculum decision-making in Schools A and B (Item No.12 - 13 of the questionnaire).**

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
RESPONSE	NUMBER	NUMBER
Yes	3	4
No	2	1
Total	5	5

The respondents to a questionnaire in School A felt that they are consulted at about half of the time whilst in School B the respondents felt that they are consulted for most of the time.

Some reasons given to substantiate consultation were that:-

- Meetings are called before any major decision is made.
- Parents, learners and staff are represented in the committees that are in the school.
- The headmaster was seen as a very insightful and a visionary person.

The reasons put forward for poor consultation or non-consultation by respondents were that:-

- Time for effective consultation was not available or too little.
- The principal in one of the schools was said to follow what one respondent saw as a “fatherly approach” whereby they as educators are expected to listen and do as the principal says. This approach does not need much participation nor consultation.

It is however important to note that educators are consulted on issues in both schools and according to the table this happens more often than not.

Learners interviewed in both schools seemed satisfied about the way they are consulted in the school. They stated that learners are represented in the school governing body and in most committees that exist in their schools. They are satisfied because they are told about every new development that is about to be introduced or changed.

There is a striking similarity between the learners interviewed in both schools. They are satisfied with the way things are at present in their schools and they seem not keen to be more involved than they are at present because, as they put it, they do not have much time left for “other things.”

**Table 7 : Views of respondent educators on the attitude of parents who are members of the governing body towards participation in curriculum decision-making (Items 18 and 19 of the questionnaire).**

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
RESPONSE		
Positive	3	4
Negative	-	-
Not sure	2	1
Total	5	5

Table 7 shows that a majority of the respondent educators think that parents have a positive attitude towards participation in curriculum decision-making. In an individual interview, educators from both schools did indeed re-iterate the positive attitude of parents especially those who are in the school governing body on all matters of the school. They all confirmed that they were generally satisfied about parents' contribution in the school's progress but, they were particularly worried about the capacity of parents when it came to issues about teaching per se or matters

of a professional nature like teaching aids and methods or inside the classroom issues.

Learners interviewed in School A thought that the attitude of their parents towards their inclusion in the curriculum decision-making was positive. They based this claim on suggestions that they usually receive from parents and students in the “suggestion box”. This is a box in the school where all written suggestions are put for consideration in the school governing body meetings.

**Table 8 : Respondent educators’ views on the attitude of learners towards participation in curriculum decisions (item No.20 in the questionnaire).**

	<b>SCHOOL A</b>	<b>SCHOOL B</b>
<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Positive	1	5
Negative	1	-
Not sure	3	-
Total	5	5

What is clear from the table is that the respondent educators from School A differ from those of School B with respect to their opinions on the attitude of learners towards participation in the curriculum decision-making processes. School B respondents are all positive that the learners are willing to be involved in curriculum decision-making activities of their school. This however seems not to be the case with the respondents from School A where only one out of five think that learners are willing to participate in curriculum decision-making. One respondent came out clearly and suggested that the learners in School A are not willing to be involved.

That educators who responded to the questionnaire feel that learners in School A are not showing positive signs towards their involvement in curriculum decision-making is disturbing and contradictory. According to learners themselves in an interview,

they are willing to be involved but feel that they are not capable enough to tackle some of the issues especially those that are of a professional nature. The problem could then be ability rather than unwillingness.

The clarity then, comes from learners themselves who state that they would like to be involved but, are doubtful about their ability to tackle some of the issues as I have mentioned before.

Besides, learners in School A, have come up with an excellent idea of a suggestion box. They are also part of such committees as the Entertainment Committee, Fundraising Committee, Sports Committee and in the Students Christian Movement of the School. They have even suggested thought that the subject on HIV and AIDS as well as Speech and Drama should be introduced in the school which to me, is a positive sign and attitude.

All respondent educators in School B think that learners are positive towards their inclusion in curriculum decision-making. This is the view that I also got from learners themselves as well. This view is in line with the view that one gets when table 8 on page 72 of this study is interpreted

It seems as if the sampled educators in School A have little or no confidence or are not sure about their learners' attitude towards participation whilst educators in School B have confidence in their learners' attitude towards participation in the curriculum decision-making processes.

Learners sampled from both schools however showed signs of willingness to be included in the activities and both thought that training is necessary on their part if they are to get more involved than they are presently.

#### **4.3.3 PARENTS' PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION- MAKING IN SCHOOLS A AND B**

In School B a parents' meeting attended was chaired by the chairperson of the school governing body. The meeting was the first of the year where parents were



welcomed by the chairperson followed by the school principal.

In this meeting the different committees that existed in the school were made known. These amongst others included the following :-

- i) The management committee
- ii) The finance committee
- iii) The sports committee
- iv) Disciplinary committee
- v) Fundraising committee

Parents feature prominently in the School Governing Body and in the Finance Committee. These are chaired by parents themselves.

Any suggestions that parents may have are communicated to the school via the principal and the various committees. The school sends several newsletters to parents as a form of communication. Parents communicate with the school by phoning, writing letters, e-mails or personally visiting the school.

In the interview that I had with a group of 3 parents later, the parents stated that their participation is mainly through the committees that they have elected. The governing body is the main of these committees. Parents also participate voluntarily in fund raising functions that are organised by the fundraising committee.

Much support is given by the parents of learners to learners especially when a school has sports activities during school hours and during week-ends. Parents interviewed in both schools however do not participate in the activities such as in the :-

- Choice of subjects to be offered.
- Selection of teaching methods.
- Choosing content of the methods.
- Dividing times in the composite time-table.
- Selection of periods to educators.

- Promotion requirements from one grade to the next and
- Deciding on teaching aids to be used in the class.

The participation of parents in the activities such as the extra-curricular activities ; formulation of the school policy, the code of conduct and the mission statement of the school is mainly through their representatives in the school governing body.

In the meeting both the chairperson of the school governing body and the principal called upon parents to contribute to the school's progress either by making suggestions or by directly taking part where possible. Notable with the parents interviewed in School B was confidence they had over their representatives in the governing body as well as in the educators. The decisions that are made by the governing body and the principal are mostly adopted without question.

In School A three parents were interviewed individually. Interviews were conducted in the places of residence of the interviewees . Like the parents interviewed in School B, the parents of School A participate mainly through their representatives in the school governing body. Not many committees however exist in school A where parents can participate. The governing body performs most of the functions without the existence of various committees that exist in School B.

Some of the parents interviewed however participated in the formulation of a school's mission statement as well as the code of conduct of the school. The implementation of the code of conduct however is a duty of the principal and the educators.

Most contributions in terms of suggestions are made in the parents' meetings that the school arranges. Two of the three parents interviewed agreed that in most of the parents' meetings that are held, the chairperson and the principal normally give a report on what the school governing body has decided. Theirs is to ask questions and to seek clarity on issue they might not have understood.

Parents interviewed in both schools showed willingness to participate in curriculum activities. Parents of School A also showed how confident they are over the

principal of their school by counting all the things he had done to improve the schools' buildings as well as discipline in the school.

What is common with the parents interviewed in both schools is that :-

- their participation in curriculum activities is mainly through representation in either the school governing body or in various committees that each school has.
- Parents seem to have much confidence over their representatives that they have elected into the governing bodies. This tends to make them adopt the suggestions of the governing body without question.

Perhaps the fact that parents are not physically at school during working hours make the principal and the educators to dominate in making most of the curriculum decisions on behalf of and for parents.

#### **4.3.4 LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION- MAKING IN SCHOOLS A AND B**

The 4 learners that were interviewed were those that served on the governing bodies of their schools. Two learners from each school were interviewed simultaneously. In School A it was the chairperson of the Representative Council of Learners and his deputy, in School B it was the chairperson of the RCL and the Secretary, both of whom were members of the school governing body.

In school A the interviewee learners stated that they do participate in the following activities:

- In the choice of subjects to be done by the school they do not participate directly but, they forward suggestions to the principal who will then heed or not heed their suggestions. They indicated that the teaching of guidance in the school was their suggestion and recently they have suggested the teaching of computer science.

It seems as if students who formed part of this study are consulted on the choice of subjects in the school even though the final decision on such an issue lies outside their domain.

- With the selection of teaching methods - they indicated that the selection is a teacher's responsibility and they can only ask the teacher for an alternative method if they feel uncomfortable about the present method.

- Learners interviewed in both schools seemed to have a greater latitude of decision-making when it comes to extra curricular activities like soccer, boxing, karate, music etc. They make a choice on their own to join codes that they like, introduce codes that they like and even take part in the coaching and training of their peers.

- They are part of the decisions on the code of conduct for learners. They determine how to deal with particular learner offences in the school.

- The seating arrangements in their classes are a teacher's responsibility but, they do make suggestions on a few occasions. Like, when they do group work or study.

- Learners interviewed in School A indicated that they have already made a written report about what they as the Representative Council of Learners, have done during the year and they have suggested what the Representative Council of Learners for the coming year should do. They are however not involved in the day to day planning of the years activities of the school. The staff and the principal are doing this and they are consulted after they have done so.

The two learners simultaneously interviewed in School A agreed that they take no part in the following activities i.e.:-

- Dividing times in the composite time table.
- Selection of text books to be used by teachers.
- Deciding which educators to teach which subject.

- Planning the school calendar or scheduling school activities for the year.
- Deciding on the teaching aids to be used by educators.
- Deciding on the assessment procedures.
- Formulation of the general school policy, religious policy, language policy and the admission policy.

■ When asked as to whether they would like to be part of the decisions in which now they are not, they indicated that they would love to but they trust their teachers and doubted their ability as learners on some matters like admission policies, assessment policy, teaching methods and teaching aids as well as in the selection of textbooks. An indication was made that it could be possible to be involved in more decision-making processes if the assistance from the staff and the principal is made more and more available to them.

■ They also indicated that they would like to have courses and workshops on the subjects like HIV and AIDS as well as Speech and Drama for learners who have talent in this direction.

In School B on the other hand, learners interviewed (as a group) stated that they participate in the following:-

■ On the formulation of a general school policy, the learners are represented on the governing body and one of them (President of the RCL) represents the students in the Management Committee of the school. This committee consists of the Principal, Heads of Department, the Deputy, Educator Representatives as well as a Student Representative. The Committee makes the most important administrative decisions in the school. Policy decisions are also discussed in this committee.

The Management Committee of the school is the internal structure of the school in which learners, educators, Heads of Departments, Deputy and the Principal himself and the learners are represented. It is an important structure since decisions are made in this committee after the views from different stakeholders (teachers and students) have been taken into consideration. A structure like this does not exist in School A. Notable with the structure is that it excludes parents of learners.

■ In group interviews held respondent learners from school B, learners stated that they do take part in the curriculum decision-making on matters relating to the following :-

■ They do not choose subjects that are to be taught in the school. Most of these have been there for some time but they do suggest alternatives if they find a subject to be difficult or irrelevant. One example they gave is that of Mathematics which is now alternated with Tourism for students that find Mathematics difficult. Students suggested that there be an alternative to Mathematics and the Management Committee suggested Tourism which students accepted. They also make choices within a subject like English, where they may do one of the two or three literature books that are prescribed for the grade.

Students interviewed are thus given options to choose from and not for them to state the options.

This goes for the teaching methods as well. It is the responsibility of the educators to see to the correct method of teaching the subject. This is the educator's decision. If learners do not understand, the educator in question can either repeat the subject matter using the same method or a different one.

■ These learners do not participate in decision-making about the school time table, the length of a school day, the selection of text books to be used for different subjects, decision about which educator is to teach which subject, the planning of the school-calendar or programme for the coming year, the selection of teaching aids, assessment programmes and procedures.

■ They have, however, taken part in the formulation of a school's mission statement as well as the code of conduct for learners. They indicated that when it comes to seating arrangements in classes, they do make suggestions as to how they would like to seat and this depends, in most cases, on what activity is happening at that moment.

■ When asked whether they would like to take part in the activities in which they presently do not take part in, they responded by saying that they would like to,

but they do not have enough time to participate in more other activities since their involvement coupled with their classwork could be unbearable. They stated that they believed in their teachers to make some of the decisions for them. This was said in respect of decisions that are made without their involvement.

They also indicated that they don't think they can be able to make some of the decisions as learners and they therefore need guidance from their teachers.

They indicated that they believed that if seminars and workshops could be organized for them, may be they would be in a better position to make more informed decisions than they presently do.

What is common with the learner samples for School A and B is that :-

- Learners interviewed have very few cases where they have finality on issues. What seems to be happening, most of the time is that, they suggest and wait for the approval of their educators and / or the principal.
- Learners in the two schools participate in fewer curriculum decisions listed than educators.
- Learners in the two schools are not eager to make more decisions than they presently do because, as they state it, they have little or no time for this and they think that they do not have capacity to make some of these decisions.
- Learners in both schools influence the curriculum decision-making process in one way or the other. Even if learners may not fully participate in making a curriculum decision that will ultimately influence them, they however affect that decision e.g. They may not be involved in making a choice about which text book a teacher should use but, a text book chosen for them may be changed if it proves to be difficult to read or very boring to arouse learner interest. This goes for all other decision where learners are not finally involved.
- There seems to be a greater latitude of participation by these learners when it comes to decision making about what is referred to as "extra-curricular"

activities in both schools. These activities include the sporting activities like soccer, boxing or karate, music, student Christian Movement, debating, drama etc. In these, the learners choose according to their own will and ability or talent and these are not part of the core-curricular of the school. Learners can choose to or not to do these. In the sports-field, they are given a chance to introduce the sporting activities that they like and know. In this field learners get more chance to teach each other than this happens in core-subjects wherein the teacher stands in front of them most of the time.

- What is remarkable though is that learners sampled from both schools seemed satisfied with their involvement in the curriculum decision-making process. They showed signs of confidence and trust in their educators and their principals.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

- 1) The respondents (educators who were part of this study) in School A and in School B have a broad understanding of curriculum as a concept.
- 2) Principals of School A and B participate in all the curriculum decisions in their schools.
- 3) In School B, the Deputy and the Head of Department participate in almost all the curriculum decisions that are made in the school, just like the principal does. School A had no respondents who held these positions.
- 4) Educators who were sampled from School A participate in fewer curriculum decision-making processes than those sampled from School B.
- 5) There are few instances in both schools where sampled educators totally take no part in curriculum decision-making but, full participation and finality on matters by these educators is more in matters relating to active teaching than in matters relating to policy decisions in their schools. This is where educators decide on their own as to how to teach, using which text book or which teaching aids and how to assess the work that they have taught.



- 6) Parental participation in curriculum decision-making is less evident than that of educators in both schools but, this seems more evident in School A than in School B.
- 7) Educators in both schools have a perception that the inability of parents to grapple with professional issues, as well as illiteracy in the case of School A, hinders meaningful parental participation in the school governing bodies.. They couple this with the fact that parents are not always at school during working hours and are therefore not always aware of what is happening which hinders their ability to make appropriate decisions than educators.
- 8) Respondent educators from School A welcome the participation of the Superintendent Education Management in the curriculum decision-making processes in their school whilst school B respondent educators do not.
- 9) Parents and learners in both schools are rated equally in terms of their capacity to make curriculum decisions by respondent educators.
- 10) The majority of educators who formed part of the study in both schools think that parents have a positive attitude towards their inclusion in curriculum decision-making.
- 11) Learners who were part of this study in both schools are prepared to participate in curriculum decision-making but they feel that they do not have the capacity to do this in all instances.
- 12) The respondent learners from both schools look up to their educators to help them participate efficiently in curriculum decision-making.
- 13) Learners in both schools make fewer curriculum decisions than educators do and are satisfied with the present consultation procedures.
- 14) Both learners and educators sampled for this study think the prospects for participative curriculum decision-making are bright in their schools.

- 15) All respondents in both schools agreed that they should be involved whenever a curriculum decision is made in their schools.
- 16) All of the educators interviewed in School A are positive that other educators in the school are positive towards participation in curriculum decision-making. In School B however the respondents have mixed feelings about this.
- 17) Respondent educators from School A are not certain about the attitude of learners when it comes to their inclusion in curriculum decision-making. In School B however, educators who were part of the sample, are certain that learners in the school have a positive attitude towards participation in curriculum decision-making.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study was to find out what curriculum decisions do the two schools make, who makes these and how.

The study achieved this by identifying of the curriculum decisions that the two secondary schools make and the extent to which the two secondary schools appear similar or different in terms of the way the curriculum decision-making processes involve or allow participation by different stakeholders in the schools.

The researcher wishes to advise those that would be interested in using the findings of this study that the findings have been generated out of only two secondary schools and can therefore not be generalized to every school. The study itself is on a small scale, so that the analysis undertaken here can therefore not be exhaustive. If the same study had been undertaken in a different setting under different conditions, the results might well be different.

The researcher also wishes to point out that some of the limitations of this study had been that it became an enormous task to pursue certain findings more vigorously. The problem of time and cost hindered the further use of follow-up interviews and a deeper exploration of such findings. Whilst these problems do not invalidate the findings of this study, it does make it rather difficult to make conclusive statements about stakeholder participation in curriculum decision-making for all schools.

The study attempts by all means to make valid conclusions but, it also becomes extremely difficult to draw genuine conclusions from some of the responses given like the “not sure” responses. The researcher has therefore been very careful that even if conclusions are made from the responses given, these can sometimes be very tentative. From these conclusions the recommendations are made.

## **5.2 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOLS A AND B**

The difference in participative curriculum decision-making by the respondents in the two secondary schools is not very much. Educators, parents and learners who were part of this study do take part directly or indirectly in curriculum decision-making processes in the two secondary schools. Both schools have structures that enable and promote participation by different stakeholders in the school. These range from representation by all the stakeholders in the School Governing Bodies to the Management Committees, Sports Committees and to committees that are responsible for doing the composite time table in the two schools.

The respondents in these schools try, like and also believe that involving all stakeholders is the way to go if appropriate solutions are to be reached for problems in their schools. This is what was expressed as a response to item No.8 of the questionnaire as well as in the interview sessions.

It looks like the main difference lies in the extent to which participation occurs and also in the distance the two schools have traveled in achieving participative curriculum decision-making. This means that even if the respondents from the two schools aspire the same way of curriculum decision-making, one school seems a little ahead of the other in terms of the way decision are made and managed. This makes it better able and efficient in the way the process of curriculum decision-making takes place than in the other school where this seems not to be the case. What seems to make a difference is thus, not that respondents in one school think that curriculum decisions are made unilaterally or in a non-participative fashion but, it is the extent to which there is evidence of participation in one school than in the other school. Participation seems more evident in School B than in School A.

### **5.2.1 PRINCIPALS' PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOLS A AND B**

The responses from the questionnaires and the interviews confirmed that the principals of the two secondary schools participate in all the listed curriculum

decision-making activities in their schools. Whilst one can argue that there should be some decisions that are made by teachers, parents and learners themselves in the school, the other argument could be that, principals are authorities in their schools and have a responsibility to make sure that everything goes right in the school and to do this they must lead from the front which makes it difficult to exclude themselves in any curriculum decision-making process in the school.

Despite a number of ambiguities underlying the principal's role and a lack of clearly defined job description, there is a general consensus that the principal, as the head teacher, is and should be the curriculum leader in the school. Dubin (1991) notes that principals are indeed the ones that should create an atmosphere for teacher involvement, participation and growth, community support and high expectations for the participants. This can be possible through the principal's endeavours and involvement in all decisions especially in the initial stages of the curriculum decision-making process.

Everyone looks upon them as figures of authority whose leadership, administration and management must be designed to maintain harmony and stability. Principals in the two schools were seen by respondents as occupying key positions which makes them responsible for everything in the school. A principal as the head of the institution is normally always taken as being in authority over his staff because he is responsible for what he does and for what others do, and because no one can be held responsible for anything that they do not control (Thusi:1993).

It can thus be concluded here that the involvement and participation by a principal in all curriculum decisions does not necessarily mean clinging to power by all means but, a responsibility principals cannot easily delegate to someone else.

This is implied in the regulations which guide them. The responsibilities of school principals are set out in the provincial education acts of different provinces. The principal of a school is responsible, amongst other things, for ensuring educational services of a high quality in the school and is responsible for educational activities to the professional administration and the implementation of policy by which the school is governed. This he does after consultation with the staff. (Pretorius &

Lemmer: 1998)

It is also very interesting that the principals of the two schools strongly believe that the involvement of stakeholders in curriculum decision-making is the right thing to do.

#### **5.2.2 PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING BY RESPONDENT EDUCATORS IN SCHOOLS A AND B.**

The analysis of table 2 of chapter 4 showed very clearly that the educators who were part of this study make fewer curriculum decisions in the two secondary schools than the Heads of departments, the Deputies and the Principal. This is concluded from the analysis of the number of instances where the respondent educators themselves stated whether they participate in curriculum decision-making on a particular issue in table 2 provided or not. There are more of these instances where educators indicate non-participation than for the Heads of Department, the Deputy and the Principal.

In another study undertaken by Mosoge and van der Westhuizen (1997) on “teacher access to decision-making in schools,” the conclusion they reach is that teachers experienced deprivation in all management activities.

The involvement of educators, as it will be seen, is different for the two secondary schools. In an interview on the issue of participation or non-participation conducted with individual educators in school B, educators unanimously expressed feelings of satisfaction and indicated that all issues are discussed and that they are part of most decisions that are made in the school personally or through representation. In the same interview conducted in School A, some of the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction about their non-involvement and non-consultation on the decision-making processes of the school.

That there is more consultation and participation by respondent educators in School B than in School A could be ascribed to the existence of a number of structures that enable educator participation and therefore give them power to decide on issues.

Educators in School B are represented in the following structures :-

- the School Governing Body
- the Management Committee
- Sports Committee
- Disciplinary Committee
- Curriculum Development Committee
- Finance Committee
- Time table Committee
- Grade heads - who control grades and work in close co-operation with Heads of Department.

Whilst it can be argued that the mere existence of structures in a school may not necessarily mean participation, it can also be argued that the existence of structures in a school does promote participation by people who are members in those structures as well as the people who elected those structures. It should be remembered that the mere existence of a democratic structure sets a stage in the process towards full participation and so for curriculum decision-making.

One can also note here that, the respondent educators in the two schools have different attitudes about the inclusion of an outsider like the Superintendent of Education Management (SEMs). The principal and the respondent educators in School A seem to welcome the help of the SEMs but, the respondent educators and the principal of School B seem not to like the idea of including SEMs in their curriculum decision-making group. A lack of interest in the help by the SEMs, by the principal and educators of School B could be a sign of independence and autonomy of the respondents whilst an interest in the help from the S.E.Ms in curriculum decision-making could be a sign of a need for help especially from outside when there is none from within.

Whilst one does note some slight differences between educators that were part of this study in the two secondary schools, it is certainly a fact that the respondent educators in both schools seem to be participating in curriculum decision-making. This difference in participation is however one of degree to which participation does

occur.

### **5.2.3 RESPONDENT PARENTS PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS A AND B**

Participation by parents who formed part of this study seemed limited compared to other stakeholders in both schools but it is even worse in School A than in School B. Respondent educators in both schools feel that parents are neither able to grapple with curriculum issues nor professional issues.

This shows how hesitant or reluctant the respondent educators are, about parents' inclusion in the curriculum decision-making process in both schools. Notable however, is that educators in School B are more confident about parents' inclusion in curriculum matters than that respondent educators in School A.

The attitude of the educators towards the inclusion of parents in curriculum decision-making results from a number of factors.

The respondent educators in School A noted a high rate of illiteracy among parents which makes it very difficult for parents in this school to make valuable contributions as they put it "most departmental documents are written in English". This does not seem to be much of a problem for School B but, educators' main worry is about knowledge of educational and professional matters. The educators who formed part of this study in both schools feel they know best what is good for education and how to teach that, not parents.

The comment by the principal of School A is worth mentioning here. The principal acknowledged the lack of participation by parents in most school matters. He pointed out that parents are only interested in the end of the year results not how those results have been obtained. He also suggested that the S.E.Ms should come to his school and to all others like his, to conduct motivational workshops for parents who hardly attend school's parents' meetings. One should note here that of this problem does seem to be prevalent in School B.



The difference of this nature could be linked to the difference in the past histories of Schools A and B. Looock and Grobler (1997) note that in Schools like B, the principles of greater democratisation and participation by parents had already been incorporated as early as 1992, whilst in Schools like A, this only became an official matter after 1996 with the enactment of the South African Schools Act.

#### **5.2.4 RESPONDENT LEARNERS' PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS A AND B**

Learners interviewed in both schools participate in the main decision-making structure of the school i.e. the school governing body. This is in terms of the Schools' Act No.84 of 1996. In addition to this, the learners in School B are represented in the Management Committee of the school. There is no indication that learners in School A make decisions at any other management level except in the School Governing Body and in the committees. The participation of learners in the Management Committee of School B enable learners in School B to make suggestions pertaining to the day to day running of the school. Whilst this could be possible at a governing body level, it seems that a structure like that of the Management Committee in School B sits more often and enable better communication channels than a structure like the School Governing Body which does not meet as often as the management committee of School B does.

Besides this slight difference in the participation by the learners interviewed in School B, the learners in both schools do make almost similar curriculum decisions. Learners interviewed in both schools do like to participate in curriculum decision-making, they feel that they should be included in almost all decision-making processes but, learners interviewed in School B showed signs of having enough to do already than those in School A. This was picked up from the interview responses. Learners in School B indicated that, if they can be included in more committees than they are presently, school work could be unbearable.

For both secondary schools learners interviewed find it a bit difficult to be part of every decision that the schools make. This results from a number of factors.

- They are in most cases having bigger work loads i.e. classworks, homeworks, study etc. so that this may automatically preclude them as effective participants.
- Learners interviewed in both schools have confidence in their principals and educators which makes it easy for the principals and educators to make decisions for learners and for learners to welcome these without question.
- The learners interviewed, more often than not, are less involved in curriculum decision-making in the two schools. This is because in almost all instances learners participate by making suggestions to educators and the principal but, the finality on these matters lies with the educators or the principal so that in all cases their suggestions seek the approval of older and knowledgeable participants i.e. principal, educators or parents.

Lack of participation by the respondent learners seems clearer when it comes to matters that pertain to how they are to be taught using which textbooks or teaching aids as well as assessment procedures. This is the field whereby learners know almost nothing about.

One cannot lose sight of the fact that learners who are at the secondary school level presently, have over the years, been through the very system of apartheid education. This system has been responsible for reproducing and maintaining the ruling social and political ideology in South Africa, namely, Christian National Education. It was thus more about instilling passive acceptance of authority than providing learners with the conceptual tools necessary for creative and independent thought which is much needed for effective participation in curriculum decision-making. Ashley (1989); Kallaway (1983); Taylor (1993); Higgs (1994).

In another study about learners, Bisschoff and Phakoa (1999) undertook a study in a bid to describe learners' perceptions of and opinions on their status in terms of the governing bodies of public secondary schools in South Africa. The aim of the study was to find and answer to a question whether or not learners are satisfied with the status they presently enjoy in the governing bodies of public secondary schools.

The participants expressed their deep-seated dissatisfaction with their present status. Even though this was a study undertaken in a different context, one can learn from it that may be learners are not effectively involved in decision-making processes in secondary schools. This is so despite the fact that participation is advocated by legislation. It is however, commendable that learners in this study showed and expressed feelings of satisfaction with their present status.

There seems to be much potential that needs tapping from the side of learners for the benefit of all stakeholders in both schools. This is acknowledged by learners themselves who think that opportunities for curriculum decision-making actually do exist in their schools. If learners suggestions are taken seriously, more of these can come forth which can promote more and more willingness to take part by learners in different forms of curriculum decision-making in the two schools.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996 emphasizes the importance of an effective partnership between schools, parents and the community. This partnership can also be interpreted to mean that parents, learners, educators and the community should have a greater say in determining what should happen in schools including curriculum decisions. It tells us that what should be included in the school curriculum should be a product of a joint decision made by school's stakeholders.

The School's Act thus changes what was the case before 1994 to a new way of school governance and a new method of making curriculum decisions. The Act calls for a new relationship between parents, learners and educators from that of a client type to a partnership type. Previously these clients had no say in the school management and curriculum decision-making. Now, it is expected that they must be partners, which indicates that all should be part of the decision-making process in schools.

Khan (1996) notes that the implications of the South African Schools Act of 1996 means that "parents and all others in partnership have equal strengths and equal expertise; they can thus contribute and deliver services on an equal basis and finally

share responsibility and accountability with the professional staff in schools” (p.60). If such a partnership can be achieved, it can be of invaluable contribution to school’s progress and can benefit the country as a whole. The question is what can be done to achieve this.

Attempts have to be made and resources be made available by the provincial Department of Education to support all those that are expected to participate in school governance and in curriculum decision-making. Principals, educators, parents and learners who are in committees and in leadership positions in secondary schools need even more and a continued support in the form of training and empowerment for them to participate effectively in making important decisions about curriculum in schools.

Even though the South African Schools’ Act sets a foundation for involvement of all stakeholders in schools and thus for a joint decision-making, there is still a need for a follow-up to see that this does actually happen. The provincial Department of Education with the help of the district officials need to visit schools on a mission to find out the extent to which there is participation or involvement of all stakeholders in secondary schools. This however need not be inspection but, a mission to offer help and support to schools by the Superintendents of Education.

The high daily demands that principals presently face thus call for special inservice training programmes, workshops and even stress management interventions to alleviate the problem. To this effect Combs (1982) points out that “for professional and personal growth it is important that principals should know and accept themselves as they are (self-concept) and opportunities during which the relevant skills of principals for managing different and diverse roles, including time management skills could be developed” (p,152). Principals therefore need to be able to identify priority areas in their lines and manage their time accordingly and this needs in-service training programmes.

It is of prime importance and very imperative that principals in schools sites must be seen to be very keen to see all stakeholders being involved in curriculum decision-making. Principals must therefore motivate everyone towards this end. The

provision of opportunities and structures for stakeholder involvement are a must for this. Even though competencies and knowledge can sometimes be a problem for some like parents and learners, these can be involved at different levels according to the skills and knowledge that they have. According to Khan (1996) these levels can range from motivation and assistance with homework to management on the school.

Schools need to identify their problem areas which inhibit effective involvement by one or all groups towards an effective and a joint curriculum decision-making. With the help of an official or an expert, they (stakeholders) should rectify the problem that inhibits stakeholder participation. Hagreaves and Hopkins (1993) note the importance of improved communication between stakeholders as a solution to the problem of the negative attitudes towards involvement by stakeholders.

A critical factor for the provision of quality education in any country is the quality of teacher education which the country's educational institutions can provide. It is the task of the teacher to transform the curriculum into experiences which will stimulate students to question, enquire, reason and search for the unknown. The question is, do teachers have this kind of expertise presently? Jennings-Wray (1980) says "teachers should be developed and be given more powers of curriculum decision-making." She suggests that since their power as a professional group has been grossly undermined through a general lack of opportunity to participate effectively in the kinds of decision-making that directly affects their lives both inside and outside the school; then more powers should be given back to teachers. The educator's voice Vol.4 No.1 of Jan./Feb. 2000 holds the view that the proper engagement of South African teachers can really transform the education system (p.3). This is the view that should go for schools as well.

Any change in the level of participation in schools is more likely if principals and teachers in the school sites do welcome participation by themselves and others. They should be prepared to share expertise with other stakeholders like parents and learners. Teachers are a group that is more enlightened about educational matters and if they welcome involvement in curriculum decision-making, they can be in a better position to enlighten other groups in the school like learners and parents. Effective curriculum decision-making demands, at least, some knowledge about

curriculum issues. Educators and principals are in a better position to have this knowledge and they should transfer that knowledge to other members as well. This suggests that the department should channel its energies towards the training of educators who will also train other members of the school governing body.

Seeing that some of the stakeholders especially in the school governing body lack skills for effective curriculum decision-making, a policy needs to be developed at a provincial level which can systematically increase participation by all stakeholders. Workshops for teachers, learners and parents are an area for great concern. Unless there is training, there is not likely to be a lot of participation from all stakeholders. Willingness to participate alone is not participation. Full participation goes with ability.

Curriculum advisors for schools can also be appointed. These could be housed in district offices and can service schools in that district or in that circuit. Curriculum advisors can be a special link between the provincial and the school's realities and can fulfil a monitoring role which is independent of the decision-making structures. Curriculum advisors can also work hand in hand with the present SEM's who at the moment seem not to fulfil an important role according to some who were part of this study.

The attitude of parents towards the school depends on the attitude of the principal towards the active involvement of the parents in the school affairs. It is therefore essential that the principal understands and accepts the right of parents to organise themselves into a collective force for implementing change. "Parents are likely to be willing and effective supporters of the school in which the principal helps to provide encouragement and professional direction to their quest for meaningful participation" (Gabela:1983). This can be enhanced by means of school visits by parents, home visits and informal meetings between teachers, parents and learners.

The participation of parents in curriculum decision-making has become more crucial now than before with the introduction of Outcomes Based Education in the schooling system. Parents are now expected to make decisions pertaining to what their children should be taught which will determine the outcomes from a particular

learning programme. They are the ones that are expected to make an important contribution in the learning of their children which in turn puts enormous demands on them in terms of their abilities to do so.

The question that arises immediately is whether parents are in a position to do this taking into consideration their previous position and status in the education of their children? Are they going to be able to do this? Have they been equipped or trained to do this? Empowerment programmes are thus more needed for parents and learners especially in schools like School A which was part of this study.

Learners are a special group that needs attention and whose talent and abilities remain untapped in most secondary schools. In most cases learners look up to the principal and educators for the approval of their efforts and initiatives. These are the people that must encourage learners to take an effective part in more and even higher level decisions in the school. If such an encouragement does take place, learners will participate willingly and without fear and can actually be more resourceful and effective in curriculum decision-making. Encouragement and patient listening by the adult members of the other members of the school governing bodies will build confidence of the (learner member)s and in this way learners will become very resourceful.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

Given the background of apartheid in South Africa, one cannot expect that there would be a swift move away from the previous apartheid background to a newly born democratic way of doing things because this cannot happen overnight. The fact is that apartheid education, which was explained in chapter 1 and 2, as anti-democratic, bureaucratic, opaque, non-inclusive and top-down, has been with us for a period of more than 50 years. It would be unrealistic to think that it can just dissipate from the minds of people who have been brought up under it and be replaced (dramatically) by the new democratic values. One cannot however overlook the effort that has been shown, noticed and observed on the part of the respondent stakeholders in the two secondary schools which is a commendable progress towards an all-inclusive approach to curriculum decision-making. This has

happened in a comparatively short space of time if we consider that the Schools Act was only enacted in 1996.

However, the new values of inclusion, democracy, transparency and bottom-up as opposed to top-down still need to have its seeds well irrigated and nourished for these to survive and grow and ultimately become an accepted way of decision-making in National, Provincial as well in school sites.

The fact remains that participation is an attitudinal matter and thus, legislation alone cannot guarantee applicability and its success. Since authoritarianism, bureaucracy and top-down approaches have always been the main influence on how curriculum decision were made was made in South Africa and in other countries, changing attitudes of principals, educators, learners, parents and the community towards participation in schooling activities based on democratic values must still be on top of the list for the provincial Department of Education.



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## APPENDIX 1

Dr Nembula High School  
P.O. Adams Mission  
4100

15 October 1999

The S.E.M.  
Amanzimtoti Circuit  
P.O. UMBUMBULU  
4105

Sir

### Re: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I am currently conducting a research on Curriculum Decision making:- in Secondary Schools. Two secondary schools have been chosen from Amanzimtoti Circuit under Umbumbulu district. The research is towards the fulfillment of the requirements for the M.Ed degree at the University of Natal under the supervision of Mr Michael Graham-Jolly.

The topic of the dissertation is **“a study of Curriculum Decision-making of two Secondary Schools at Amanzimtoti Circuit.”** One school will be randomly selected from ex-KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture and the other from the research will be for this study only and it will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Information gathered will be of invaluable assistance to principals as managers of schools, school governing bodies, pupils as well as the department itself. A copy of research findings will be made available to you on request.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

---

**DLUDLA L.E.**

APPENDIX 2  
**KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND  
CULTURE**

**DURBAN SOUTH REGION  
UMBUMBULU DISTRICT**

Tel: (031) 915 0036; 915 0001; 915 0222; 915 0221  
Fax: (031) 915 0189

Private Bag X1022  
**UMBUMBULU**  
4105

MR DLUDLA  
DR NEMBULA HIGH SCHOOL  
P.O. ADAMS  
4100

DEAR SIR

THIS IS ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF YOUR LETTER REQUESTING TO CONDUCT RESEARCH  
IN SOME OF OUR SCHOOLS.

KINDLY LIASE WITH THE SCHOOLS CONCERNED. I AM POSITIVE THAT THE SCHOOLS AND  
THEIR GOVERNING BODIES WILL BE OF ASSISTANCE TO YOU SINCE YOUR RESEARCH  
WILL BENEFIT EDUCATION AS A WHOLE.

OUR SCHOOLS HAVE ALWAYS SUPPORTED US. THAT IS WHY I AM CONFIDENT THAT IF  
ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE WITH THEM THEY WILL BE SUPPORTIVE.

I WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK IN YOUR STUDIES.

SINCERELY YOURS

B.D.F. NGCOBO

*B.D.F. Ngcobo*  
DEPUTY CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST

RECEIVED ON 11/11/99  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
DISTRICT DIRECTOR: UMBUMBULU  
1999 -11- 10  
PRIVATE BAG X1022  
UMBUMBULU 4105  
TEL. NO: 031 - 9150036/12/33  
KWAZULU-NATAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

### APPENDIX 3

Dr Nembula High School  
P.O. Adams Mission  
4100

15 October 1999

The Principal and the Chairperson of the Governing Body

.....  
.....  
.....

Sir

#### Re: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am presently conducting a research on Curriculum decision-making in Secondary Schools at Amanzimtoti Circuit. Your school has coincidentally been chosen to be one of these schools from Amanzimtoti Circuit.

The research is aimed at the fulfillment of the requirements for the M.Ed degree at the University of Natal under the supervision of Mr Michael Graham-Jolly. The topic is **"A Study of Curriculum decision-making in two Secondary Schools in Amanzimtoti Circuit."** All information gathered will be treated with strictest confidentiality. This information can however be made available to you on request.

I believe that the information that will be gathered will be of invaluable assistance to Principals, Governing Body members and to the Department itself. I believe that for any policy-making initiative to succeed, those responsible for the initiative need to know what is happening in our schools; the problems we face and what we think should be the solutions to our problems.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

---

DLUDLA L.E.

## APPENDIX 4

QUESTIONNAIRE  
AA 928  
P.O. UMLAZI  
4066

15 October 1999

Dear Colleagues

I am presently doing research on curriculum decision-making in secondary schools. Your (secondary) school has been chosen for this purpose. I therefore appeal for your assistance by filling the questionnaire and may be later, a brief interview with me.

I promise that all the information you supply is for this study and will be used only for it. The information is strictly confidential and I will keep it that way. I wish to assure every participant that permission for this study has been given by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture and is therefore approved.

I wish to further encourage all participants to participate in this study as it will enlighten education officials about realities in our schools which may justify the present policy or warrant a different one.

Yours faithfully

---

**L.E. DLUDLA**

## EDUCATORS QUESTIONNAIRE

### A STUDY OF CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS :

*[For the purpose of this study a curriculum includes all activities or learning experiences that are provided by the school for its learners. A curriculum decision is thus the one which pertains to teaching and learning in your school.]*

CONFIDENTIAL:

#### SECTION A.

#### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please indicate with a cross (X) where appropriate.

Kindly indicate your:

1. PRESENT RANK

- |     |                    |                          |
|-----|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.1 | Principal          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.2 | Deputy Principal   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.3 | Head of Department | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1.4 | Educator           | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. SEX

- |     |        |                          |
|-----|--------|--------------------------|
| 2.1 | Male   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.2 | Female | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS?

- |     |                      |                          |
|-----|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 3.1 | A diploma            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.2 | A degree             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.3 | Matric / Std 10 only | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.4 | None                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### 4. TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 4.1 Less than 1 year ☐
- 4.2 1 year to 3 years ☐
- 4.3 4 Years to 5 years ☐
- 4.4 6 Years and above ☐

### SECTION B:

### CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING

5. Indicate with a cross which one of the following definitions coincides with your understanding of the Curriculum.

- 5.1 A curriculum is a syllabus of a school. ☐
- 5.2 A curriculum is a syllabus and all that the school does to make learning possible in the school. ☐

6. Indicate with a cross whether or not you have participated in making the following curriculum decision in your school.

	Yes	No
6.1 Choice of subjects to be taught in you school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.2 Choice of teaching methods to be used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.3 Choosing the content of what is to be taught.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.4 Allocating time on the composite time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.5 deciding on extra-curricular activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.6 Selection of text-books to be used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.7 Deciding on the subjects which educators should teach.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.8 Planning the school programme for the year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.9 Deciding on teaching aids that you are to use in your subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.10 Deciding on assessment policy procedures and times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.11 Formulation of the general school policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.12 Formulation of the school's mission statement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



- 6.13 Formulation of a learner's code of conduct.
- 6.14 Formulation of educator's code of conduct.
- 6.15 Deciding on seating arrangements in the classroom
- 6.16 Deciding on religions policy in the school.
- 6.17 Deciding on language policy of school
- 6.18 Deciding on the admission on the admission policy of school.

Yes	No

7. Who on the following, in your opinion should make curriculum decisions in your school?

- 7.1 The principal
- 7.2 The Deputy Principal
- 7.3 The Head of Department
- 7.4 The Educators
- 7.5 Parents of learners
- 7.6 Learners
- 7.7 The S.E.M. (Inspectors)
- 7.8 The Department of Education

Yes	No

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement;  
"Educators should be involved whenever a curriculum decision is made"

- 8.1 Strongly agree ☐
- 8.2 Agree ☐
- 8.3 Strongly disagree ☐
- 8.4 Disagree ☐
- 8.5 Not sure ☐

9. Please give reasons for your choice in 8 above.

---

10. Would you say that opportunities exist for participative decision-making between education, parents and students in your school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Please give reasons for your answer to 10 above.

---

---

---

12. When a curriculum decision is to be made in your school, would you say that proper consultation takes place between all stakeholders.

Yes ☐ No ☐

13. Please give reasons to support your response in 12 above.

---

14. How would you describe the attitude of educators towards their involvement in curriculum decision-making.

14.1 Positive ☐

14.2 Negative ☐

14.3 Not sure ☐

15. Can you give any reasons for their attitude in 14 above?

---

---

---

---

16. Do you agree that "The involvement of stakeholders in curriculum decision-making can itself develop their skills as participants towards making sound curriculum decisions in the future"?

Yes ☐ No ☐

18. How would you describe the attitude of parents who are members of the school governing body towards their involvement in the curriculum for decision-making of your school?

18.1 Positive ☐

18.2 Negative ☐

18.3 Not sure ☐

19. Please give reasons for your response to 18 above.

---

---

---

20. How would you describe the attitude of learners towards their participation in curriculum decision-making in the school?

---

---

---

21. What would you suggest can be done to encourage participation by all stakeholders in making curriculum decisions in your school?

---

---

---

22. Have you had any formal training in curriculum matters.

Yes ☐ No ☐

23. Have you at any time attended or been involved in a seminar about how curricula are designed and developed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

24. Would you consider yourself empowered enough to take part in curriculum decisions-making relating to curriculum development and curriculum evaluation.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

25. In which of the following structures that may exist in your school do you participate? Indicate with a cross (X)

25.1 Sports committee ☐

25.2 Disciplinary committee ☐

25.3 Curriculum development committee ☐

25.4 Finance committee ☐

25.5 School Governing body ☐

25.6 Other specify: \_\_\_\_\_

26. How did you become part of the structures in 25 above?

26.1 Nominated ☐

26.1 Elected ☐

26.3 Participate voluntarily ☐

27. Who do you think should have a final say in the following matters in your school? Please tick the appropriate box.

	Principal	Deputy Principal	Head of Dept.	Educators	Parents	Learners	Dept. Officials
27.1 Choice of subjects to be offered							
27.2 Selection of teaching methods for subjects							
27.3 Choosing content of the syllabus							
27.4 Dividing times in the school's composite time-table							
27.5 Deciding which extra-curricular activities the school will offer like soccer, athletics, music, etc							
27.6 Selection of textbooks to be used							
27.7 Deciding which educator/teacher is to teach which subject.							
27.8 Deciding on the number of periods that are allocated to teach subject.							
27.9 Plan/schemes of work for the year							
27.10 Deciding on other curriculum materials to be used e.g. teaching aids etc.							
27.11 Deciding how the tests and examinations will be conducted and when?							
27.12 Deciding on the length of the day to be used for active learner-educator contact							
27.13 Promotion requirements from one grade to another							

28. How often does it happen in your school that a curriculum decision is made without you being consulted or involved?

28.1 Often ☐

28.2 Seldom ☐

28.3 Never ☐

29. Would you like to make any further comments of curriculum decision-making process in your school?

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

God bless you.

Yours faithfully

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**L.E. DLUDLA**

## APPENDIX 5

### THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW THEMES / QUESTIONS

- Interviewees will be asked to comment on curriculum decision-making.
- Amongst other themes, the following will be covered:-
  - What decisions are being made i.e. decisions about what?
  - Who makes these i.e. who participate in making these decisions?
  - Are there any Councils, structures or committees that exist in the school?
  - How were these formed?
  - Who are members in the committees?
  - Are all members, in the respondent's opinion, equally competent or are other members dominated by others?
  - The respondent's opinion/s on who should be making what decisions in the school and why?
  - The respondent's opinion on how to enhance participation in curriculum decision-making in their schools?