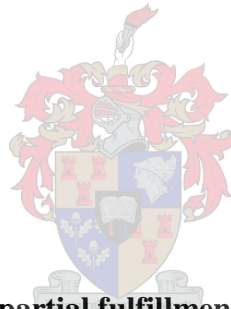


**LEADERSHIP AND PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE
AT SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

NDIVHUWO M RAMOVHA



**Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy (Leadership in Education)**

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

SUPERVISOR: DR B VAN WYK

December 2009

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: December 2009

ABSTRACT

This study explores leadership and productive school culture, and focuses on school leadership at selected schools in the Nzhelele West Circuit in the Limpopo Province. Leadership plays a pivotal role in the functioning of any organisation, be it in business or in education, and the concept of leadership has become more prominent over the last decade, and there are various debates around its meaning and what it entails. In order to develop a better understanding of leadership, a literature review is conducted. This review highlights the differences between leadership and management, and explores different leadership styles.

With regards to productive school culture, this study indicates that schools may look alike in terms of their physical structure, composition of staff members and purpose of their existence, but may differ drastically on how they operate. This kind of culture represents the common shared values, rituals, ceremonies, stories and an internal cultural network that values heroes, such as an extraordinary teacher. I conclude that school culture and school leadership are inseparable issues because cultural management remains the responsibility of the school leadership

This study finds that leadership is of vital importance in all organisations, and that the meanings of the concept of leadership have changed over years. Further, administering schools in a democratic fashion still pose tremendous challenges to the school leadership as a whole. It seems as if the schools which are part of this investigation still struggle to adjust to a democratic dispensation. This research therefore concludes that school leaders need to ensure that they are both good managers and effective leaders. They must also ensure that the culture at their schools is conducive for teaching and learning.

Keywords: leadership, management, schools, leadership styles, productive school culture.

OPSOMMING

Die studie behels leierskap en produktiewe skool kultuur, en ondersoek skool leierskap by verskeie skole in die Nzhehele-Wes kring in die Limpopo Provinsie. Leierskap speel 'n belangrike rol in die funksionering van enige organisasie, en die konsep het meer prominent geword oor die afgelope dekade. Daar is ook verskeie debatte rondom die betekenis van die konsep. Met die doel om 'n beter begrip van leierskap te verkry, is 'n literatuur studie voltooi. Die literatuur studie dui op die verskille tussen leierskap en bestuur, en verskeie leierskap style word ondersoek.

Met betrekking tot produktiewe skool kultuur toon die navorsing dat skole dieselfde mag lyk ten opsigte van hul fisiese struktuur, personeel samestelling, en die doel van hul bestaan, maar mag drasties verskil in hulle funksionering. Dié tipe kultuur verwys na gemeenskaplike waardes, rituele, seremonies, stories en 'n interne netwerk wat helde, soos buitengewone leiers, vereer. My gevolgtrekking is dat skool kultuur en skool leierskap onskeibaar is omdat die kulturele bestuur nog steeds die verantwoordelikheid van die skool leierskap is.

Die studie bevind dat leierskap van kardinale belang in alle organisasies is, en dat die betekenis van die konsep "leierskap" oor jare baie verander het. Verder bied demokratiese skool administrasie nog steeds baie uitdagings aan skool leiers. Dit wil voorkom asof skole in die ondersoek ook probleme ondervind om aan te pas by 'n demokratiese bedeling. Hierdie ondersoek kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat skool leiers moet poog om beide goeie bestuurders en effektiewe leiers te wees. Hulle moet ook verseker dat die kultuur by hul skole leer en onderrig ondersteun.

Sleutelwoorde: leierskap, bestuur, skole, leierskap style, skool kultuur.

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Finally, my profound gratitude goes to my brothers, sisters and daughters: Mpho, Shonisani, Seani and little boy Iphi for their understanding, patience, unwavering support, encouragement and sacrifice during this research period.

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my mother-in-law, Mrs Sara Movha Ramovha, the Phaswana family, my husband Simon, my daughters Mpho, Shonisani, Seani and the only and beloved boy IPFI whose support saw me through to the completion of this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Opsomming	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication	vi

CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.2	BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	2
1.3	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	3
1.4	AIM OF THE STUDY	4
1.5	RESEARCH DESIGN	4
	1.5.1 Research question	5
	1.5.2 Research methods	6
	1.5.2.1 Literature review	6
	1.5.2.2 Interviews	7
	1.5.2.3 Sample and sampling procedure	7
	1.5.3 Research methodology	7
1.6	CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS	9
	1.6.1 Effective leadership	9
	1.6.2 School Management Team (SMT)	9
	1.6.3 School based management	10
	1.6.4 Organisation	10
	1.6.5 School manager	11
	1.6.6 School culture	11
	1.6.7 Productive school culture	11
	1.6.8 Situational leadership	12

1.6.9 Organisational climate	12
1.6.10 Transformational leadership	12
1.6.11 Transactional leadership	13
1.6.12 Power	13
1.6.13 School development plan	13
1.6.13 South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU)	13
1.6.14 Decentralisation	14
1.6.15 Hermeneutic approach	14
1.6.16 Task-oriented or productive-oriented leader	14
1.6.17 People-oriented or people-centered leadership	15
1.7 CHAPTER ORGANISATION	15

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION	16
2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LEADERSHIP	16
2.2.1 Trait approach up to the late 1940's	16
2.2.2 Behavioral approach between the late 1940s and 1960s	18
2.2.3 Autocratic Leadership Style	19
2.2.4 Democratic Leadership Style	20
2.2.5 Laissez-Faire Leadership Style	21
2.2.6 Situational approach (late 1960's to present)	22
2.2.7 Transformational approach	25
2.3 UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS	29
2.4 POWER AS A CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP	32
2.4.1 VARIOUS STYLES OF LEADERSHIP	33
2.4.1.1 Legitimate power	33
2.4.1.2 Coercive power	34
2.4.1.3 Reward power	34
2.4.1.4 Personal power	34
2.4 SUMMARY	35

CHAPTER THREE: SCHOOL CULTURE

3.1	INTRODUCTION	37
3.2	UNDERSTANDING PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE	39
3.3	THE ROLES OF SCHOOL LEADERS IN DEVELOPING PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE	42
3.4	THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CULTURE	50
3.5	SUMMARY	51

CHAPTER FOUR:

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1	INTRODUCTION	53
4.2	DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS	53
4.3	RESEARCH FINDINGS	54
	4.3.1 INTERVIEW RESPONSES	55
	4.3.1.1 Vision and mission statement	55
	4.3.1.2 Opportunity to make decisions	55
	4.3.1.3 Discipline maintenance	56
	4.3.1.4 Monitoring of attendance in class lessons	57
	4.3.1.5 Challenges facing school principals	57
	4.3.1.6 Involvement of learners and parents in the smooth running of the school	58
	4.3.1.7 Professional development of staff	58
	4.3.1.8 Job satisfaction	59
	4.3.1.9 Monitoring of instructional teaching and learning	59
	4.3.1.10 Safety measures put in place	59
4.4	SUMMARY	60

CHAPTER FIVE:**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

5.1	INTRODUCTION	61
5.2	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	61
5.3	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	63
5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS	64
5.5	POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY	67
5.6	CONCLUSION	67
	REFERENCES	69
	APPENDICES	74

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays a pivotal role in the functioning of any organisation, be it in business or in education. The concept of leadership has become more prominent over the last decade, and there are various debates around its meaning and what it entails. Many authors have different views on the concept; as such Kohn (1977:356) pronounces that there is no universal agreement on what leadership actually is or how it is defined.

But it seems as if 'leadership' is becoming more preferable to 'management'. It is important that a distinction be made between these two concepts, as they are easily confused, and sometimes used interchangeably. Management as defined by Malan (2000:123) is just one of the processes of leadership. It is more concerned with carrying out policies and handling the day-to-day routine functions and activities of the school to keep it running smoothly, whereas leadership is more concerned with issues above the routine directions and focuses on creating a vision for the future state of affairs.

There is a misconception that an individual occupying a given status or holding a specific title or placed in a certain position in the hierarchy, or granted special authority is considered a leader. This is the case in schools where the school principal is perceived as a leader due to his position. Therefore, leadership in this sense is tied to a position. But leadership is not all about position power in an organisation's management hierarchy, but about personal power that enables the leader to create future and desired quality of life (Gerber, Nel & van Dyk 1987:353).

Developments related to the technological era, globalization, curriculum change and teaching and learning, have brought leadership under review. Before the democratic government came into power in South Africa in 1994, schools were managed differently.

Education was centralised and it was structured with control coming from the top. Principals had to manage schools on their own by taking unilateral decisions.

Leadership in schools is now confronted with the challenge of establishing new cultures of teaching and learning that is, culture that encourages teamwork and fosters critical, creative and independent thinking to be matched by appropriate skills and competencies. This type of leadership is envisaged to cultivate attitudes and values that are compatible with the ongoing transformation of society.

In this democratic era, school principals are expected to do away with autocratic approaches and to provide leadership. They need to understand departmental policies, which encourage collective leadership, and this could be achieved if they establish school-based management teams. It is for this reason that the Department of Education is committed to conducting various workshops around Limpopo Province to capacitate the principals with relevant skills. The skills acquired will assist them in reassessing the existing school culture, to see if they are in line with the democratic norms of this country.

School leaders are now expected to have a vision for their schools. Learners, parents, teachers and all interested stakeholders are also expected to become involved, and to make this vision a reality. Through this vision, parents, learners and the entire community can find meaning in the running of schools, which will result in planning future schools better. Educators too, must be involved and consulted in order to facilitate ownership of this vision. Research indicates that what people help to create, they will support (Bjork, 1984 in Altikson, Wyant & Senkhane 1996:9).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

It is helpful first, to briefly give the background to the problem before the specific research problem itself is described. This study focuses on schools in the Nzhelele West Circuit in the Limpopo Province. Some of the Nzhelele West Circuit schools are located

very close to each other and is hardly 5km from one school to the other, and most of them are next to the public road. All these schools appear similar in many respects, though they differ in their way of doing things.

At some of these schools, I have noted several times that some learners are outside the gates every day, and some of them even walk back home during school hours. In addition, some educators at these schools arrive late frequently, and learners complain about educators who do not turn up for lessons. It is hard to understand how teaching and learning can take place in such a situation. Therefore, I suggest that leadership at such schools needs to be re-assessed.

Based on the above scenario, I was prompted to investigate the leadership styles within these schools in order to understand or establish how effective or ineffective the leaders are in carrying out their responsibilities, and how they contribute towards the establishment of a culture of teaching and learning. I strongly believe that leadership is the backbone of any organization, and as such it has an influence on the school as a whole. It is for this reason that I decided to study the leadership styles in the said schools.

It is my belief that findings of this research could contribute towards more effective leadership in schools. Leadership that is not effective is almost the same as having none. I foresee that the findings of this study could assist school leadership with strategies and skills that can promote productive culture and achieve good academic results. Put differently, this study may help school leadership to become more effective. My background of teaching for 18 years, coupled with being a Head of Department (HoD) for 10 years has put me in good stead as part of management, and has opened up an opportunity to carry out this research.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Due to the transformation of the education system, school leaders are expected to transform their institutions with regard to teaching, learning and a leadership approach.

Most of the educational policies since 1994 place an emphasis on the democratisation of institutions. Thus school principals need to establish School Management Teams (SMTs) and this school-based management is the point of entry for decentralising authority, and the school principal should be at the forefront of the change.

The school leadership is expected to establish a new culture of teaching and learning. Such a school culture is one of the aspects that are crucial in making our schools learning organisations. But prior to our democratic dispensation, things were different in schools. They were different in how decisions were taken, and how schools operate. Many of the decisions were taken solely by the school principal as it was perceived that the school principal knew it all. Since there is a paradigm shift on the way leadership is exercised in the new dispensation, schools need to operate differently. To this end, school leadership should ensure that a new culture focusing on productivity is established.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to investigate the role of leadership in developing productive school culture in Nzhelele West Circuit secondary schools. The objectives flowing from this aim are:

- To identify the characteristics of effective leadership, and
- To determine the role of leadership in developing a productive school culture.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell (1994:154), research design refers to the plan through which relevant data will be collected. This study on the role of leadership in developing a productive school culture employed the case study design which included the use of qualitative methods. I used a qualitative approach for the reasons explained next.

Firstly, the data was obtained in a natural setting (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:405). I personally visited the selected individuals in their schools to collect data. This means that

the variables that were investigated were studied where they naturally occurred, not in researcher-controlled environments under researcher-controlled conditions, as is the case in quantitative studies. I interacted with the selected individuals in their natural settings.

Secondly, I regard qualitative methods as important because most of the descriptions and interpretations in this study are portrayed in words rather than numbers, although numerical data may be used occasionally to elaborate the findings identified in the study (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:373).

Lastly, I view qualitative research as a suitable approach for this research because it provides me with an opportunity to understand the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (McMillan & Schumacher 1997:500). Understanding was acquired by analysing the many contexts of the participants and by narrating participants' meanings which included their feelings, beliefs, ideas, thoughts and actions regarding the role of leadership in developing productive school culture.

I next discuss the research question, research methods and research methodology.

1.5.1 Research question

The main question that needs to be addressed in the study is the following:

How can leadership contribute towards a productive culture of teaching and learning?

Most problems are multi-faceted, and as such, in dealing with the problem posed in the above question, it is necessary to further sub-divide it. This gives rise to the following sub-questions:

What is the role of leadership in developing productive school culture?

What are the strategies used in good leadership?

The above questions beg for answers, which this research seeks to address. To answer the above questions, the investigation looked at both the theoretical and empirical evidence on how leadership contributes towards productive school culture.

The investigation was conducted within the Soutpansberg District in the Makhado municipality, Limpopo Province. Within this municipality there are four circuits: Nzhelele West, Nzhelele East, Soutpansberg North and Soutpansberg East. Nzhelele West Circuit was chosen for this study. There are fourteen secondary schools in the Nzhelele West circuit and only three of them were randomly selected. Thus, three schools formed the core of this study, and these schools were chosen due to their close proximity.

1.5.2 Research methods

This study uses conceptual analysis to explore the key concepts. According to Van Wyk (2004), conceptual analysis attempts to establish ‘logically necessary conditions’ for the use of a word. Sufficient (which he accepts as enough, or more than enough) conditions must exist to make a concept necessary. Also, concepts can only be understood in relation to other concepts.

For the purpose of data collection, this study uses a literature review, semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire. I next discuss these methods.

1.5.2.1 Literature review

I consulted relevant literature, such as dissertations and theses, journals, and other primary and secondary sources in order to elicit information pertaining to the role of leadership towards developing productive school culture. I also provided a critical synthesis of what I perceived to be crucial to the research topic.

1.5.2.2 Interviews

This technique is used to augment the questionnaires. The questions are exactly the same as they were written in the questionnaires. These interviews were conducted on the day of collecting questionnaires. Similar questions as those in the questionnaires were posed to the principals, HoDs or Deputy Principals and educators. My intention for using interviews is influenced by the ideas of Kerlinger (in Manion 1996:273) who states that interviews can serve three purposes: they may be used to follow-up unexpected results or validate other methods, or go deeper into the motivation of respondents and their reasons of responding as they do.

1.5.2.3 Sample and sampling procedure

According to Arkava and Lane (1983:27) (in Strydom, Fouche & Poggenpoel *et al.* 2001:191) sampling is the element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. We study the sample in an effort to understand the population from which it is drawn. The importance of sampling is feasibility because it is impossible for me to study all school principals, HoDs and teachers in the province of Limpopo. The point is that whatever sample I study, it would potentially help me to understand school leadership much better.

The concept of sampling involves taking a portion of a population, making observations, administering a questionnaire, conducting interviews in a smaller group and then generalizing the findings to the population. In a qualitative survey research of this nature, sampling is indispensable to the research because the type of conclusions that can be drawn depends directly upon whom the research was conducted (Cohen & Manion 1989:247-249). To obtain further information, I also made use of interviews and a questionnaire.

My target population comprised of 3 principals from three secondary schools, 3 Heads of Departments (HoDs) and 3 educators from each school. The total sample was 9, and

participants were purposefully selected, as their selection was by virtue of their positions.

1.5.3 Research methodology

The methodology specifies how a researcher may go about practically studying whatever he or she believes can be known (Durrheim & Terre Blanche 1999:6). Procedures are planned and these make presuppositions that inform the knowledge that is generated by the inquiry. In this study, the investigation describing the method of acquiring, analyzing and interpreting data was important for better understanding. My study is based on investigating leadership and productive school culture in selected secondary schools with special reference to the Nzhelele West Circuit in Limpopo Province.

In order to accomplish my goals, I adopted an interpretive approach to investigate my research topic. Research techniques such as literature reviews and interviews enriched the acquiring of knowledge from the setting. This method was appropriate for this study because it facilitated the gathering of information about the problem in its context, and I was able to describe, analyse, and interpret people's feelings and experiences.

The theory of interpretivism is derived from hermeneutics. It is holistic in nature, scientific in approach and understanding is arrived at through empathy. This approach is characterized by a particular ontology, which specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known about it. Its epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known. This methodology specifies how I went about studying practically whatever I believe can be known (Durrheim & Terre Blanche 1999:13). Based on this theory, as a researcher I believed that the reality that was studied consisted of people is subjective experiences and therefore understanding these experiences was significant. The advantage of this approach is that it left room for re-interpretation and reshaping of the problem during the process of dialogue, prior to action and during action.

According to the theory of interpretivism, leadership is the result of social processes and

shared experiences. The intention of this study was not to generalize findings but to understand the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. This study focused on how individuals experience their environment, unique setting, unique principal; and his/her unique school management team (SMT). It is for this reason that I adopted an inter-subjective, epistemological stance towards reality and used techniques such as questionnaires and interviewing respondents. I learned about people's experiences within the school setting by interacting with them. The point is, when I viewed an experience from a distance I could not say things about it that I could say from within the situation.

Understanding the phenomenon quite intimately is acquired by analyzing many contexts of the participants and by narrating participants' meaning for these situations. Meanings formed the basis of data and they include participant's feelings, beliefs, thoughts and actions. The study report consisted of a summary of what interviewees said.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

There are key concepts that are considered to be of importance to this study, and they need to be clarified in order to provide a theoretical framework for the use of concepts. I thus attempt to provide meanings or to define these concepts from an educational understanding.

1.6.1 Effective leadership

Effective leadership is regarded as a point of departure in an educational organisation. Change in the education system requires effective leaders. According to Schreuder and Landey (2000:5) this is leadership where members of a team work together harmoniously and with a sense of solidarity. To understand the word 'effective' necessitates further explanation. 'Effective' according to Collins (South African School Dictionary 1999:271) means working well and producing the intended results. In relation to this study, effective leadership refers to leadership, which sets the vision, the goals and the strategies to reach those goals. Effective leadership is perceived to be exercised by the school principal and

the management team. In this study, school leadership referred to the school principals and their School Management Teams (SMTs).

1.6.2 School Management Team (SMT)

According to the School Management Team (SMT): Introductory Guide (2000:2) the legislation does not define School Management Team (SMT), as it is constituted according to the needs of the individual school. This is because it is established as a way of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions. The SMT is constituted by the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments either appointed or not. In some schools, where there are no heads of department or deputy principals, this team can be constituted by a selected group among the staff members. School Management Team in this study is basically referring to the team established in a school setting with the responsibility of leading. Although this team is established to assist in the running of the school, final accountability for all matters of the school is vested in the school principal.

1.6.3 School based management

Before our democratic dispensation, the education system was centralised, and decisions were taken from a higher authority rather than from within the school premises. But currently, the decentralisation of the education system has filtered down to the schools. School principals have been empowered, together with their SMTs, to take decisions collectively within their institutions. This has resulted in collective leadership, and leadership has become the responsibility of everyone.

1.6.4 Organisation

The BBC English Dictionary (1992:811) defines an organisation as a group of people who do something together regularly in an organised way. The school in this study is, therefore, regarded as an organisation.

1.6.5 School manager

The school manager is one of the major role players in the management of the school. His or her role is no longer just confined to planning, directing, controlling and managing only, but also to provide leadership. Nationally, the Department of Education is currently carrying the responsibility of transforming managers to become effective leaders. In this study school managers will be used interchangeably with the school principals.

1.6.6 School culture

School culture is generally seen as the normative glue that holds a particular school together because of the shared visions, values and beliefs. Therefore, culture serves as a compass setting; steering people in a common direction (Chance, Cummins & Wood 1996:121). School culture represents the unwritten rules and traditions, norms and expectations that permeate everything; the way people act; how they dress; what they talk about or avoid talking about; whether they seek out colleagues for help or don't; and how teachers feel about their work and their students (Deal & Peterson 1999:2). School culture refers to how things are done in a particular school.

1.6.7 Productive school culture

Productive school culture, as defined by Karpicke and Murphy (2000:69), is the kind of culture that produces excellence in learners' academic achievements. This type of culture is a composite of the values and beliefs of the people within the organisation. Productive school culture is not the responsibility of the school principal alone but he/she must provide leadership and support that which translates into an environment that result in increased productivity. I strongly believe that if this type of culture takes its course, schools will have learners that produce excellent results, as productive school culture is the culture that focuses on productivity and excellence..

1.6.8 Situational leadership

This is leadership which creates opportunities for individuals to select the style that is most suitable for them and circumstances involved (Broadwell 1996:3). Situational leadership reproduces the essentialist position with regard to the context. Varied contexts demand different kinds of leadership. Therefore, a leader needs to be versatile in varied situations. Situational leadership is one of the approaches which this study subscribes to.

1.6.9 Organisational climate

This is the management factor which has an influence on the quality of the working life of teachers, as well as their perceptions (Van der Westhuizen 1991:631). In this study the climate of the organisation will be accepted as the atmosphere that prevails. The relationships among members of staff themselves, learners, and the school management team characterizes the organizational climate. Teachers could perceive a particular climate as open or closed depending on how they experience it. In an open climate teachers are given the freedom to perform their duties as they see fit, and leadership only facilitates. The closed climate is unsupportive and the staff obtains little satisfaction from their work.

1.6.10 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is about a paradigm shift in thinking about leadership. It is a radical departure from the ordinary, everyday thinking. The term transformation became popular after our democratic elections in 1994. Many organizations talked about the transformation of their operational systems, and the required leadership which focuses on achieving transformation. Allix (2000:9) defines transformational leadership as leadership that focuses on the relationship between leaders and followers but with a moral background that is based on wants, needs, aspirations and values of followers. Transformational leadership is crucial in this study because this is a new paradigm in leadership, and one which I, as a researcher, would like to focus on.

1.6.11 Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership stems from more traditional views of workers in organisations, and it involves the position power of the leader to engage followers for task completion (Burns 1978, in Bennet, Crawford & Cartwright 2003:32). This type of leadership focuses on bartering because it is temporal, utilitarian and a non-binding relationship that occurs for the purpose of exchanging valued things. As this is one of the leadership approaches, this study will highlight leadership of this nature and its implications on school.

1.6.12 Power

Power is described by Moorheads and Griffin (1998:385) as the potential ability of a person or group to exercise control over another person or group. Power is the capacity to cause a thing to happen that would not have happened without that capacity. Power in this study alludes to the legitimate power of the school principal. I assume that power should be used in the school context to provide quality education, and should not be abused or merely used for personal gain, which may defeat the provision of quality education.

1.6.13 School development plan

A school development plan is a means of setting out and starting up the school community's intentions with regard to its future development and a way of initiating or managing the implementation of the plan. School development plan is a long-term plan and it indicates clearly as to who is to do what, when and how.

1.6.14 South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU)

SADTU was launched in 1990 in Johannesburg, and it aims to unite teachers and educationists and to work for a non-racial, non-sexist, just and democratic system of

education in a free and democratic South Africa. In this study SADTU refers to a union that represents teachers (in Limpopo province) in sorting out grievances.

1.6.15 Decentralisation

While decentralisation covers a broad range of concepts and each type has different characteristics, policy implications, and conditions for success, a basic conception common to most definitions is that decentralisation is a transfer of some form of power from the central to the local level. Accordingly, it may be defined in terms of the form (functional activities) and level (national to sub-national) as well as the nature or degree of power that is transferred (Education Policy Studies 2004). Hence, it refers to powers given to schools to manage themselves. In this study, the term refers to the power of making decisions on site.

1.6.16 Hermeneutic approach

It is a study of the interpretation of texts, and is holistic in nature. It is based on empathy in order to understand the motives behind human reactions. It further strives to understand individuals in their entirety and in their proper context (Keeves & Lamonski 1999:32). The process of this study was shaped by this approach. Van Wyk (2004) states that generally speaking, one could say that when we deal with human beings and human products we are involved in a hermeneutic process. This makes this approach very relevant in researching matters pertaining to education.

1.6.17 Task-oriented or productive-oriented leader

This is a leader who focuses on getting the job done. A task-oriented leader emphasises aspects such as planning, scheduling and processing the work (Malan 2000:132). This is the kind of leader who is ignorant of building good relationships with his followers. Task-oriented leaders in this study refer to leaders who only focus on job satisfaction.

1.6.18 People-oriented or people-centered leadership

Leaders who are people-centered are more concerned about the welfare and feelings of their subordinates or followers. These leaders regard people as of importance within their organisation and they believe these people need to be treated as human beings.

1.7 CHAPTER ORGANISATION

Chapter Two highlights some early research on leadership by consulting available sources. Various approaches or styles used by school leadership are reviewed and their impact on the schools as a whole are discussed. As this chapter focuses on a literature review of leadership, there is an attempt to construct a framework for managing and leading schools.

Chapter Three provides an overview of productive school culture and its significance. The challenge of the school leadership to establish school culture is crucial in this chapter. Strategies to enhance productive school culture are also crucial for school leadership. This chapter discusses what researchers said about the culture of the school and its impact on success and productivity.

In **Chapter Four** the research findings are analysed, interpreted and synthesised. A critical integration of literature study findings and empirical research findings are presented.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the major findings of the study. Conclusions and recommendations are drawn and possibilities for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Leaders and managers in schools are faced with challenges of operating in a rapidly changing world. Globalisation and technological advances and increased expectations that the society has of its education system, have replaced past certainties with new and uncertain frameworks. This implies that school principals have to change their management strategies. They are also expected to change their schools, and make schools places of teaching and learning that will empower learners to function effectively as civic-minded individuals.

Dynamic change has become the order of the day, even or in schools. Thus, leaders need to see things with new perspectives. They need to meet the challenges and develop new approaches in order to operate successfully in their new environments. School leaders need to understand the changing nature of the wider society, as well as the forces that can have an impact on schools.

Leadership has undergone some metamorphosis since the early 1940s. Transformation of the education system calls for a new type of leadership in the schools. To be able to understand how the new thinking of leadership relates to the times and how the issues, challenges and the context of a particular time frame influences the practice of leadership, we need to take a closer look at how different leadership approaches developed.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LEADERSHIP

2.2.1 Trait approach up to the late 1940's

Over the years, leadership has been studied extensively in various contexts by various

researchers. Many studies attempted to unravel what leadership is. In some cases it has been described as a process or a relationship between leaders and the subordinates. Various meanings were ascribed to those who were leaders. Early researchers attempted to define leaders based on the character of the individual; that is traits such as intelligence.

The aforementioned statements are based on the fact that there are people who are born leaders. In this instance, leadership is typically defined by the traits and was explained by the internal qualities that a person possesses. The thinking was that if the traits that differentiated leaders from followers could be identified, successful leaders could be quickly assessed and put into positions of leadership (Bennet, Crawford & Cartwright 2003:27).

In his research Stogdill (1948) (in Hoy & Miskel 1978:377) found a number of traits that were associated with a leader, but he went further to conclude that the trait approach by itself had yielded negligible and confusing results. This statement was based on the notion that a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits because the impact of traits varies widely from situation to situation.

In this instance, the trait approach itself resembles its weaknesses. Though the specific traits mentioned earlier on have never yielded a list that can be used for predictive purposes, some of them are crucial and need to be found in some leaders. When this approach was researched further by Bennis (1982) in Hughes (1999:12), five characteristics manifested by an effective leader became obvious. It was found that this kind of leader has a strong vision of where the organisation needs to go. This leader is also able to communicate his/her vision to others and failure was seen as an opportunity to learn. Such leaders are able to empower others and develop an environment within which workers strive for excellence.

The re-visiting of the trait approach by researchers based on the above statements, indicate that though there are new approaches to leadership; which are based on the old

approach. In my view, this proves that the trait approach is relevant in determining an effective leader today.

Therefore, it stands to reason that in leadership, no characteristics are the possession of all leaders and possessing a number of traits does not guarantee successful leadership. But, somehow, there are a number of traits which can be associated with effective leadership. The trait approach to leadership, no matter how old it is, is still relevant to the current situation. Therefore, it is this approach that has shed light on our understanding about leadership. There is no one universal set of traits that will ensure successful leadership (Kapp 2000:54).

2.2.2 Behavioural approach between the late 1940s and 1960s

The second thrust looked at leaders' behaviour in an attempt to determine what successful leaders do, not how they look to others. They consider the action and style in which these actions were performed (Kapp 2000:54). In their actions, they lead others by their own example as they live by the values that they profess. The ways in which these leaders behave earn them respect. With regard to this approach, two aspects of leadership behaviour were identified as initiating structure and consideration. The former is an orientation towards the task and the latter is an orientation towards the relationship with people (Hoy & Miskel 1996:382). The impact of this study shed light on the fact that leadership was not necessarily an inborn trait, but instead, effective leadership methods could be taught.

This study on behavioural approach broadens the horizon of the management focus to include both people-oriented activities along with task-oriented activities (c.f. Par 1.9.17). Most leaders probably fall along a continuum between the two. It is the research from Michigan that took into account the importance of informal leadership in contrast to formal leadership (Kapp 2000:55).

As leadership behaviour deals more with style or action it is feasible that we understand

what impact these styles or approaches have on our schools and how they are perceived by followers. Different approaches have different impact in an educational setting and on the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning environment. Again the leadership style of the management has an impact on the achievement of many educational institutions. Researchers have made little progress in identifying what behaviours differentiated leaders from followers. I next discuss several leadership styles.

2.2.3 Autocratic Leadership Style

The literature consulted describes autocratic leaders as those who determine policy and assign tasks to members without consulting them (Cawood & Gibbon 1981:59). Leaders who are autocratic do not believe in delegating authority or power sharing with subordinates. They like to do things their way and they use their position and power to get things done. Leaders of this nature focus more on the task than on individual development and motivation, they are less flexible and tend to resist change (Van der Westhuizen 1991:190). It has been found by researchers that in schools where the leaders are autocratic, members of staff view the school climate as punitive, non-supportive and offering little change for individual initiative (Sergiovanni & Starrat 1983:57). Job satisfaction is very low because decisions are solely taken by the principal. Thus communication is one way: top to bottom.

Even though the autocratic style seems to create tension between staff members and the principal, at times, it is a feasible style which should not be totally ignored. This is because there are situations in which this style is more appropriate. If a school is on fire, for example, the school principal can give instructions that everybody must vacate the premises without consulting members of staff. But sometimes a school leader can apply his/her authority in a misappropriate way. A school leader needs to be vigilant and skillful to be able to know when to apply any type of style. There are management roles which sometimes require the principal to just give instructions, for example in policy implementation.

The school principal cannot debate with staff members about the Department of Education's (DoE) policy, for instance that corporal punishment in schools has been abolished. The principal may not debate with members of staff whether to do away with corporal punishment or not. The principal should only see to it that staff members adhere to this policy. What is important in this case is to implement, rather than to debate and reach consensus.

I believe that an autocratic leadership style can be utilized effectively if the principal has a good relationship with his/her staff members. If the tone or climate that prevails in the school is open, I am inclined to believe that an autocratic style can at times be applied with ease. The principal must also guard against excessive use of this style. It is important to note that at times the way in which leadership is practiced refers to how it is perceived by staff members. Some school principals may regard themselves as democratic while being perceived as autocratic by staff members.

2.2.4 Democratic Leadership Style

The democratic leader leads by participation. He focuses more on teamwork, individual involvement and interpersonal relations. A democratic leader always discusses, consults and draws ideas from the members in a participatory manner (Van der Westhuizen 1991:190). All the members of an organisation feel important because they are recognized and the school leader always stresses the necessity for positive human relation and co-operation. Leaders, who provide democracy in their workplace, open up the possibility for creativity among staff members.

In schools, principals tend to vacillate between democratic and autocratic styles. There are times in which the democratic style is very relevant but at times it is not. A school principal cannot always involve staff members in every decision that he/she makes. There are times when the final decision rests with him/ her as the leader. The school leader must realize that he/she can only share ideas and reach consensus but he/ she cannot share accountability. From my experience, it is sometimes very hard when the school principal

has to apply a democratic leadership style; some staff members may feel comfortable while others regard it as a waste of time. Staff members may think that the school principal needs to get on with it.

On the other hand, a democratic leader runs a very low risk of taking wrong decisions. He or she stands a better chance of succeeding when the decisions are taken collectively as they cannot be revoked by one person. In a school where the school principal consciously involves members of staff in decision making, there is perhaps a better chance of building a successful school. This is based on the idea that one of the members of staff may come up with a good idea. When these people reach consensus and the idea is implemented, the leader receives all the accolades for good leadership.

Though the democratic approach seems to have an advantage when applied in schools, the school principal should be prudent enough not to allow a situation of laissez-faire which could lead to anarchy. Again in applying democratic style, the school principal needs to be wise and capable enough to make decisions which are more appropriate to the situation.

Some researchers in the leadership field have argued that a democratic leadership style creates an atmosphere that is supportive, free and friendly (Steinberg 1998:139). But in many situations combinations of autocratic and democratic styles are evident. This therefore proves that both of them are not mutually exclusive. It is for this reason that further research over the last several decades has clearly supported the contention that there is no one ideal leadership style. Successful leaders are able to adapt their style to fit the requirements of the situation (Altikson, Wyatt & Senkhane 1992:15).

2.2.5 Laissez - Faire Leadership Style

Leaders who make use of this style are very casual and prefer not to get too involved. They provide general rules and guidelines and leave the individuals to get on with things. Leaders exercising this approach are reluctant to make decisions or deal with problems

directly (Cawood & Gibbon 1981:59). In schools where this style is always practiced, there is a lack of purpose and indecision reigns. As activities are not well coordinated and monitored, it is presumed that this style can lead to frustration because the leader relinquishes his leadership position.

I have mentioned earlier that the excessive use of the democratic approach can lead to a laissez-faire approach. At times school leaders who are not very sure about their roles and responsibility prefer this approach where everybody decides according to his/ her wish. Schools where this style of leadership is applied can result in chaos because there is no order and purpose of the school's existence. School leaders who embrace this approach satisfy their needs, and that of staff members, at the expense of learners' needs and the institution as a whole.

Thus, I am inclined to believe that this style cannot take the school very far but it gives individual teachers an opportunity to explore, be themselves, they get a chance to exhibit the potential for leadership. On the whole, this style should not be excessively utilized as it can tarnish the image of the school.

2.2.6 Situational approach (late 1960's to present)

Situational leadership is a term that has been used to describe the variation in styles of leadership to meet different demands and different contexts (MacBeth & Myers 1999:56). A situational approach to leadership as developed by Hersey and Blanchard (in Owen 1991:173) highlights the importance of contextual factors. This approach shed light on the fact that it does not focus only on the leader per se, but on varying demands and contexts and their impact on leadership effectiveness. The main principle of this approach is that: "Leadership is specific and always relative to the particular situation in which it occurs" (Gerber, Nel & Van Dyk 1996:362). According to Kapp (2000:58) this approach deals with the major question of the extent to which managerial work is the same or unique across different types of organisations and levels of management This influences us to think that if organisations and managerial work differ, the situation will determine

the style that needs to be used with different people in different situations. It is for this reason that a school principal performing a task with teachers will use a style that differs from the one used when guiding students in that particular context.

According to Tannebaum and Schmidt (in Gerber, Nel & Van Dyk 1996:364) the following three forces have an influence on leader effectiveness:

- a) Personality, knowledge, background and experience. All these factors can influence the leader to behave in one way or another. A leader who feels insecure may have leadership problems. It is important for a leader to have self-confidence.
- b) The forces that could influence the followers. The leader must know the people they are leading. The more the leader knows the people they are leading, the more effective his leadership. Each subordinate has expectations of how the leader will act towards him or her and expectations vary according to individuals.
- c) The general situation may also affect a leader's behaviour. The type of an organisation and its traditions can affect the leader's behaviour. Hughes (1999:13) stated that the culture of an organisation affects how a leader attempts to lead as well as his/her perceptions about his/her organisational role.

It is crucial that new leaders study the culture of an organisation which they are leading. This will enable them to know how to influence their followers in order to reach the desired goals because all situations require leaders to behave in a flexible manner. For the best-fit behaviour of leaders, they must be able to "diagnose" the human and organisational context so that they become aware of the forces that may arise as the environment is dynamic.

Apart from the forces that have an influence on the behaviour of the leader, Broadwell (1996:2) add another factor that will also influence the style of the leader. That is, the

“maturity” level of the subordinate. Maturity is the individual’s or group’s competency to perform a particular task. A leader should vary his/her style ranging from directing, delegating, selling and participating. Hersey and Blanchard (in Owen 1991) state that when the leader deals with inexperienced teachers him/her leader must use the directing method, but for more experienced teachers the participatory method is ideal.

The maturity level of an individual or a group needs to be established within clearly defined limits. I am of the view that before leaders choose their style either delegating or participatory, they must be guided by the developmental level that a subordinate exhibit on a specific task. The school leader, who generalizes the maturity status of teachers, tends to prematurely thrust responsibilities on teachers who are not yet ready for a particular task.

Individuals tend to be at different levels of development regarding certain tasks. School leaders should provide assistance to their teachers for what they can’t do at a given time. I concur with Law and Glover (2000:24) who state that maturity levels do change with time, as individuals attain greater personal and professional maturity. School leaders must not only know how to vary their leadership style, but when to change styles to fit the responses and capacities of their teachers.

In addition to the concept “maturity” of subordinates, Hersey and Blanchard (1988) (in Owen 1991:173), introduce the training of leaders as of importance. They believe that this could allow these leaders to learn to expand their range and choose the appropriate style to fit a situation. Reddin (in Owen 1991:180) ascribe to the same view. Reddin devoted considerable effort to the development of training techniques that will enable the leader to select and use the leadership style that is appropriate in a given situation. I am inclined to support training as it capacitates leaders with new skills and techniques which can contribute to leading effectively and efficiently. My view is supported by the fact that leadership is an area that changes over time as organisations and individuals evolve, and therefore needs to be continually assessed. Training should not be an end in itself but it should be a continuous process.

Instead of focusing leadership development almost exclusively on training individuals, it is imperative that a pool of leaders is available all the time through the creation of a community of leaders. Schlechty (1991) (in Broadwell 1996:9) states that learning new skills and abilities is required of all who participate in the life of the school. Reddin (in Owen 1991:180) states that, no one starts a job knowing how to do everything well, job competence is a learned skill.

Though situational leadership approach gained prominence, some other researchers such as Bass (1985), Burns (1978), McCall (1977) (in Owen 1991:182) indicate that the approach has its own weakness as it only focuses on easily observable leader-follower relationship with little regard for the goals to be accomplished. Once again there is little agreement as to when a particular style is likely to be effective. Despite its weaknesses, situational leadership approach is very useful even today because leaders can read the situation and apply the appropriate style. Ni (1987) (in Murphy and James 1991:1) posits that effective leaders have been those individuals who are able to adapt their style of leader behaviour to the needs of the situation and the follower.

2.2.7 Transformational approach

The transformational leadership approach, which is based on the writing of Burns (1978), draws a distinction between transactional and transformational leadership. These two approaches represent opposite ends of the leadership continuum but they can be complementary. The former is conceptualized as “ordinary” and the relationship of leader - follower is temporal and non-binding which occurs for the purpose of exchanging valued things. In schools these leaders recognize what employees want from work and try to provide them with what they want if their performance warrant it (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 393).

Transactional leadership stems from more traditional views of workers and it involves the position power of the leader to use followers for task completion (Burns 1978). Transactional leadership is in essence a social exchange approach which focuses on the

practicalities quality of leader-follower relationships where leadership is regarded as a social process which is transactional in nature. The key motivator in transactional approach is self-interest. This type of an approach is required for the maintenance of a steady state situation. Followers are approached with an eye to exchange one thing for another. Transactional approach takes the form of bartering. In this instance, leaders trade with potential participant something they have for something they want. The above statement sheds light on the fact that bartering is not likely to get us very far for very long unless the emphasis changes from bureaucratic to professional authority as cited by Sergiovanni (1994:194). In other words Sergiovanni is of the view that “what gets rewarded gets done”. It therefore makes one to believe that one complies as long as the exchange continues.

The convention of rewards or incentives has two dimensions. At times these rewards can bring motivation mode to members of staff. On the other hand, rewards may lead to competition among teachers themselves rather than to complement each other. The frequent use of rewards may also lead to teachers becoming dependent and may feel manipulated. Sergiovanni (1994:195) states that reward won't take us very far. I concur with this statement because members of staff put more effort when there are rewards and when rewards are no longer forthcoming, nobody is motivated to do any work or make an effort. At that stage, individuals may perform at the bear minimum level.

Regarding the issue of reward, my opinion is that motivation should not be solely based on rewards. At times, even some appreciation words like “thank you” or “well done” can bring motivated behaviour. People like to be acknowledged. I believe that motivation from within has more value. It is for this reason that Calitz (1992:27) says that the ability to get the best of teachers is closely related to the degree to which the principal can bring about motivated behaviour in staff. Sergiovanni (1994:195) was also correct when he stated that when motivation comes from the inside, everyone becomes self-managing and self-leading. Above all, motivation should not be seen as the only element in eliciting certain behaviour from teachers but knowledge and abilities also play a decisive role. It is my fervent belief that people who feel good about their work and their own abilities will

be content and productive.

Transformational leadership also goes beyond a mere transactional approach. This is leadership that is extraordinary and it focuses on the relationship between leaders and followers but with the moral purpose which is grounded in the fundamental wants, needs, aspirations and values of followers (Allix 2000:9). This has to do with motivational and psychological forces, including cultural and symbolic aspects. Symbolic leadership is practiced when providing a unified vision of the school through proper use of words and actions. This vision enables the principal to understand what must be done and why it must be done.

Unlike transactional leadership, the relationship of transformational leader and follower is characterized by bonding (Sergiovanni 1994:193). The emphasis on bonding in the relationship is characterised by mutual caring. Transformational leaders recognize the importance of people in the organisation. They don't recognise them only as resources or assets but rather as rational human beings who want to be treated with care. They also know why people exist because without them, they know leadership could not exist. Transformational leaders are very sensitive to the feelings of other people and empathize with subordinates. Hoy and Miskel (1998:394) accentuated that transformational leaders are charismatic, visionary and inspirational as they stimulate others to view their work from new perspectives and motivate them to look beyond their own interests. These are leaders who see another picture not yet actualized. They see things which belong to their present picture but which are not yet part of it.

But Kotter (2000:1) opposes "charisma" as part of leadership. He points out that leadership has nothing to do with having "charisma" or other exotic personality traits, as leadership is about coping with change. Bhindi and Duignan (1997:117) made a similar statement; that many people within the organisation are no longer prepared to be compelled by leadership charisma, status or hierarchy or compelled into compliance by coercion or economic threats.

I agree with Kotter, above, that leadership is about coping with change. During the time of transformation, leaders are regarded as change agents because change does not occur naturally. It is the responsibility of leaders to see to it that it does happen within their institutions. Furthermore, if leadership is not willing and committed to bringing change, obviously it will never happen. Leaders are considered successful if change succeeds. Sergiovanni (2001:41) stated that some leaders who are considered highly effective, are not because they have improved their schools, but because they have changed their schools.

But still based on Kotter's view of leadership, I don't concur with him when he states that leadership has nothing to do with charisma or other exotic personality traits. Though personality traits are not solely used to identify a leader, when the trait approach to leadership was re-visited, researchers found that a number of certain traits were associated with a leader (c.f. Paragraph 2.2.1).

Moreover, leadership according to Crawford (in Crawford, Kydel & Riches 1997:2) means the ability to influence people to commit themselves towards the desired goals. Ogawa and Bossert (in Crawford, Kydd & Riches 1997:12) concur that leadership is about to influence the performance of organizations, by affecting the minds and behaviour of participants. I believe that, if leaders are change agents, they must be able to inspire and influence people to accept change and be able to cope with it. Change will never happen if members of an institution are not inspired to do so. Having said that, my view is that leaders should nowadays also be charismatic.

Though this leadership approach gained favour in the current decade, there were some indications of concern with this approach. Bennis (1991) (in Pat 1994:6) believes that this model may not be feasible given the realities of day-to-day work demands. Sadler (1997) (in Schreuder and Landey 2000:09) points out that this approach takes into account leadership during a process of change and not under normal circumstances.

Despite all the criticism stated above, transformational leaders are in high demand during

this period of change. These are the leaders with vision and who can bring change within institutions when it is needed most. Foster (in Hughes 1999:76) postulates that transformational leadership reflects on the reality of current conditions and dares to question existing practices. It is for this reason that I regard this approach to leadership as of importance especially during this period of transformation.

2.3 UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Leadership in schools is somehow different from other organisations. In a school set up, when a person is appointed to a particular post with a particular job description and is high up in the hierarchical ladder, he/she is considered a leader. Many people have strong views on what makes an effective leader and they assume that the leader will have a position of some power or authority. Based on this premise, this can be defined as the trait theory approach whereby researchers have tried to identify the common personality characteristics of individuals with effective leadership skills. These people seem to concentrate too much on just one aspect of leadership; that of using authority or power within a group to make followers take up a certain course of action. This notion stresses the importance of one person as a leader.

Leadership can be argued to be more than this. It can be viewed as a process with leaders being identified as those who make particular contributions to leading and leadership (Crawford, Kydd & Riches 1997:2). Leadership can therefore have its origins in more than one member of a team. There is a need to challenge the traditional approach to leadership as one person doing something on behalf of others. Leadership in this context can thus be understood as one who can lead or inspire others to lead themselves.

The above notion suggests that leadership exists within each individual and it is not confined to the limitation of formally appointed leaders. It is for this reason that for leaders to be more successful, they need to facilitate each individual in the process of leading himself or herself. However, leadership according to Pat (1994:1) should be seen as a process in which leaders are not seen as individuals in charge of followers, but as

members of a community of practice.

A community of practice is defined as people united in a common enterprise that share common values, beliefs, ways of talking and ways of doing things. As leadership is a process, it is vital that we study this social process, which happens with groups of people who are in the activity assumed to play an active role in leadership. Their social process is based on their relationship, which is intentional and purposeful in pursuit of a common goal. This social process is embedded in the influence and motivation a leader has upon followers. As the leader attempts to influence people, he/she has certain motives in mind and he mobilizes them to gain their support while in turn they also regard him as a means of satisfying their need. In this social process, both leaders and followers exchange ideas and sentiments. The leader and followers depend on one another hence leadership is shared and their relationship is reciprocal.

Nevertheless, the social process of the leader and follower could not be effective without communication. Communication is the best way of passing information from one person to the other. It also provides a linking pin between plans and actions. A leader can have good plans and good staff, but until something begins to happen, a leader will have accomplished nothing. One writer stated that neither motivation nor leadership could bring about action without communication (Bittel 1990:290). An important aspect of communication is that the leader should avoid one-way communication, which flows from top to bottom. This communication will determine the organisational atmosphere; communication should come from all angles. A leader should always bear in mind that, lack of consultation and poor communication could have disastrous effects on staff morale and cohesiveness as leadership is a social process based on communication (Dinham 1995:52).

The communication between leaders and followers is based on trust. Trust is an important aspect in leadership. Don (1996:5) says that where trust is present, creativity thrives. An effective leader allows his staff to take risks and to take decisions that might not be the best. When staff members are offered the responsibility of taking risks, they are

empowered. The principal must learn to trust and support the decision taken by teachers even when such decisions are made in his absence.

Apart from trust, leadership encompasses wise decision-making and problem solving. To this end Sizemore (in Baptise, Hersholt & Walker de Felix 1990:22) contends that taking a wise decision is when a leader is able to “diagnose” the issue at hand and arrive at a decision that is technically sound and maximally feasible. In shared decision-making, the school leader should consider the nature of the problem as well as the ability of his members of staff to make a sound decision. He or she must discern what is negotiable and that which is non-negotiable.

The only kind of leadership worth following is based on vision. Leaders inspire a shared vision. They must have a desire to make something happen, to change the way things are, to create something that no one else has ever created before. This vision should be communicated in a way which secures commitment among members of staff and accept it as their own. They must be made to understand this vision and be allowed to talk about it. This will assist school leaders to find out if this vision is feasible and its goals attainable. It is for this reason that a vision needs to be concise, clear and compelling, hence it needs to be understood and known by all community members.

Leadership is all about creating networks with the wider community (parents). It can be hard for a school leader to let the school function effectively through achieving desired goals without the assistance and co-operation of the wider community. The participation of such people has all sorts of benefits to the school as a whole. It has been found in research that the involvement of the community influences academic achievement (Freiberg 1999:125). The school leader should consider that the community could assist in various ways like providing expertise in specific areas. Therefore leadership implies forming relationships with the wider community.

The most effective leaders are involved and in touch with those they lead. It is for this reason that leadership is all about team effort. There are various teams which a school leader can establish within the institution in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

The leader alone cannot create anything of lasting value. The team approach is beneficial to institutions because in a team multiple skills are prevalent and creativity comes about through co-operation.

Leadership and management are both the role to be played by school leaders. Although there has been much debate over their differences, these terms tend to be used interchangeably (c.f. Paragraph 1.1.). Managers carry out the responsibilities of their official positions, and exercise authority, thus handling their day-to-day activities. Leaders, on the other hand, are concerned with issues over and above the routine directives of the organisation and focus on creating a vision of the future. School leaders in a dynamic and changing South African society must be both good managers and skilled leaders. Therefore, both leadership and management are crucial aspects in effective leading.

Although there are numerous roles and responsibilities for effective leaders not mentioned here, these leaders are usually familiar with the needs of their schools. They manifest active involvement in school activities without excessive control on staff. They influence the teaching strategies of their teachers and put emphasis on monitoring teacher and pupil performances and make valuable suggestions for the improvement of teaching and learning. Effective leaders are committed to both academic and non-academic goals and objectives of the school and create a climate of high expectations for both teachers and students. Effective leaders do not spend most of their time in administrative duties at the expense of what is happening in the classroom.

I conclude that not all school leaders possess all the qualities that I have mentioned so far. What is of importance is for them to strive to possess some of these qualities. This can be achieved through relevant professional development programmes.

2.4 POWER AS A CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

As leadership is about influence, it is closely related to the concept of power. As leaders

influence people to do things so that the required results are achieved, this is closely related to the exercise of power of some sort. Leaders use various types of power to influence people and at times this power can be important to success or failure. As defined by Moorhead and Griffin (1998:385), power is an ability of a person or group to exercise control over another person. Power resides in individuals such as managers and in formal settings like a school or formal groups such as cliques of influential people.

Power could be easily understood from this point of view that if a person can be influenced or convinced to change his or her opinion on some issues, or influenced to do things in a certain way, the person has exercised influence and used power. It is therefore undisputed that power is a pervasive part of any organisation.

But because of the potential for its misuse and the concerns that may arise, it is important that school principals fully understand the dynamics of power. If power is not used appropriately, feelings of distrust may develop. If power is used appropriately, school principals are likely to find that there are people committed to do their work.

2.4.1 VARIOUS TYPES OF POWER

There are various types of power which leaders can exercise in order to ensure that the activities of the organisation are executed as required.

2.4.1.1 Legitimate power

This is power granted by virtue of one's position in an organisation. In a school setting, school principals exercise legitimate power over their subordinates. The organization specifies that it is legitimate for the designated individuals to direct the activities of others. As legitimate power is directly linked to position, it follows that when the person in the position vacates a post, the power also diminishes. The school principal has the power which is limited to the school environment which is also limited to the scope of work. Thus, the school principal cannot force a teacher to take his/her child to the doctor as this

falls outside the scope of the teacher's work.

2.4.1.2 Coercive power

Moorhead and Griffin (1993:386) describe coercive power as that which exists when someone has the ability to punish or physically or psychologically harm another person. Coercive power could cause tension within an organization, and school principals will use this to discipline learners and teachers. But it is important that both teachers and learners understand what is expected of them. Before disciplinary measures are taken, the principal should provide reasonable warning. It is clear that coercive power carries a considerable cost in subordinates resentment and hostility.

2.4.1.3 Reward power

This is the power by which a person controls rewards that are valued by another person. The simplest examples here are pay and promotions. In the school environment this power is limited to the employer which is the Department of Education (DoE), unless the school is independent. School principals cannot exercise this type of power as rewards, like promotions and pay, rest with the DoE. But school principals are not limited to plan for rewards or any incentives to reward teachers for work well done. When rewards are made, they should be both reasonable and feasible. An acknowledgement of work well done could make a difference in the lives of subordinates.

2.4.1.4 Personal power

This type of power can be associated with politics and politicians. Charisma contributes to personal power. In schools, personal power could be visible in some teachers who are not in managerial positions but this is demonstrated in staff meetings. It is to the advantage of schools if there are teachers with personal power which is exercised to the benefit of the school. Other teachers can utilize their personal power to influence other staff members not to comply with rules and regulations set for the school. Power used at

this level is detrimental to the success of the school. However, a combination of personal and position power, when used simultaneously, has the greatest potential influence on people's actions. A school principal with personal power used in an appropriate manner could benefit the school. It is for this reason that school principals are encouraged to be leaders and managers.

Although there are numerous roles and responsibilities for effective leaders not mentioned here, these leaders are usually familiar with the needs of their schools. They manifest active involvement in school activities without excessive control on staff. They influence the teaching strategies of their teachers and they lay emphasis on monitoring teacher and pupil performances and make valuable suggestions for the improvement of teaching and learning. Effective leaders are committed to both academic and non-academic goals and objectives of the school and create a climate of high expectations for both teachers and students. Effective teachers do not spend most of their time in administrative duties at the expense of what is happening in the classroom.

It goes without saying that not all school leaders possess all the qualities that I mentioned so far. What is important is for them to strive for possession of some of these qualities through relevant professional development programmes.

2.5 SUMMARY

Although the literature consulted attempted to give a definition of what leadership is and how leaders can be identified, the literature has provided only a small part of the broader picture. At first, leadership itself puts emphasis on the exercise of formal authority in achieving the goals of the school. But as research went further, leadership was linked to personal qualities (traits) and associated with behaviour and style. Researchers even studied the styles which these leaders use and how it impact on followers. Later on researchers were interested in the context in which leadership was exercised. This was based on the notion that different situations require different patterns of behaviour to be effective. Although this approach was seen as having some weaknesses, it was considered

favourable.

With the onset of the democratic dispensation, researchers became interested in studying transformational leadership. These leaders were assumed to be relevant during the time of transformation. Various researchers indicated that leadership is a collective issue which engenders a social influence between the leader and followers. Currently this approach is considered favourable, but it was challenged by some other researchers. It is vital that the effectiveness of leadership be researched further and findings should continuously shed light on the issue of effective leadership.

In a nutshell, my opinion is that no one style of leadership can be considered the best. All of them offer valid insights into the nature of leadership. Educational context is too complex and unpredictable for a single leadership approach to be adopted for all events and issues. Each style has both advantages and disadvantages, but, situational and transformational leadership styles are more favourable to me because situational leadership style gives the leader an opportunity to vary the style depending on the situation. A transformational leadership style is relevant as it relates closely with the current situation. Transformational leadership puts an emphasis on vision which is an integral part of an effective leader.

CHAPTER THREE

SCHOOL CULTURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Culture is an elusive subject and findings for it is difficult because it is used by the general public when they refer to the customs and rituals that society develop over the course of their history (Kinsler & Gamble 2001:58). Currently organisations, like schools, are also making use of similar concepts when they refer to the climate and practices that these organisations developed around their handling of people, and how these people interact with each other. Culture, in its true sense, is something that is not tangible but has a tremendous influence on every activity within an organisation. Any number of organizations, be it a church, a business or a school develops a culture of its own. Therefore culture is closely linked to an organisation. Culture must always be perceived in human terms because only human beings create it. The interactions, relationships, beliefs, assumptions, values and norms of people, capture a certain culture.

It is quite surprising that culture is often overlooked in schools. Sometimes it is not even planned for nor monitored when other activities are planned. When things are not going well as scheduled or when the school experiences poor results, culture is not regarded as crucial as one of the determinants of such failure.

Every culture changes with time and space. It is not static but dynamic, and its dynamism is influenced by various factors like socio-economic, cultural and political factors. All these factors change the behaviour of people; hence culture change as well. In reality, the culture found within the environment also filters to the schools and had an influence. It is for this reason that the school cannot be separated from its immediate surroundings.

The education system in South Africa is also influenced by the political dispensation. Since 1994, the democratic dispensation necessitated the transformation of our education

system. This education transformation is linked to the democratic values enshrined in our Constitution. Some aspects of our traditional school culture have been labeled counter-productive and there has been a need for the modification of this culture. Schools as organisations are expected to move from more traditional, hierarchical structures to a more team-based structure. Change in educational policies, curriculum and organisational structures shaped the role and responsibilities of the school leaders. There has been a need for establishing new working cultures based on commitment and collaboration which will improve the quality of the education system in schools.

Prior to democracy in 1994, some schools were battle fields of transition. They were considered to be instruments which will expedite changes. The political flavour which was within our communities filtered to schools. Teachers and learners were always absent from some schools, while late arrival tended to be the norm in some. One could see that things were not going well. A number of schools also experienced high drop out rates. It was during that epoch that we talked about the “breaking down of the culture of teaching and learning.”

During this period school leaders were confronted by inescapable challenges. The struggle which was visible in schools challenged their authority; they seemed to have been disempowered. On the other hand the teacher unions served as an important aspect of the liberation movement. The culture of the school by then looked different. School leaders lost control and with the absence of discipline from both teachers and learners, learning and teaching was totally disrupted and out of control in some schools. Currently school leaders are struggling to ensure that teaching and learning takes place in a conducive environment free from disruptive practices. They are striving to instill in the minds of learners that education is their future.

But it seems as if some schools have not yet reached a conducive educational environment, and at others there seems to be an appropriate culture of teaching and learning present. Here both teachers and learners may still have some negative habitual patterns of arriving late at school. It could further be pointed out that in some of these

schools, there are discipline problems. Some of the school leaders are still very skeptical about introducing a collaborative leadership model because they think their authority would be undermined. Nevertheless, the authoritarian style of leadership cannot survive.

There is a need for school leaders to embrace the participatory management style through which all stakeholders get involved. This is another way in which our schools can be transformed. It must also be noted that transformation is a process, but school leaders must be ready to ensure cultural changes in their schools.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

Schools may look alike in terms of their physical structure, composition of staff members and purpose of their existence, but may differ drastically on how they operate. Though they might have the same purpose, their achievements or success differs. Schools are like people; they also have personalities and unique ways of doing “business”. Obviously this is based on people’s beliefs, their life experiences and what is valued in a particular school. This unique personality causes their differences. Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1998) (in Bush 2003:157) contend that culture serves to define the unique qualities of individual organisations.

Karpicke and Murphy (2000:69) define a productive school culture as the culture that produces excellence in learners’ academic achievements. This kind of culture represents the common shared values, rituals, ceremonies, stories and an internal cultural network that values heroes, such as an extraordinary teacher. In schools where this kind of culture prevails, history is always maintained in a form of celebration. By so doing tradition is passed from generation to generation.

For further understanding of what school culture is and how it can be exhibited in schools, there is a need to unpack its three levels and give clarity to the issue. The three levels of culture are that of artifacts, which are visible and represented by symbols, the espoused values, norms, beliefs and levels of assumptions. The artifacts display the most

visible aspects of a culture. This includes what one can observe and hear when members of staff interact with each other. It embraces the manner in which members of staff dress, their language, observable rituals and ceremonies held at school, physical environment, stories and the myths told and published about the organisation (Chance, Cummins & Wood 1996:121).

Rituals and ceremonies are crucial in any school as an organisation. Rituals are the daily interactions that are imbued with meaning. They give us an opportunity to act out what is hard to touch and comprehend, while at the same time they help to make common experiences and uncommon events. These rituals and ceremonies held in a school are very important because they support and celebrate beliefs and norms. In the absence of ceremonies to honour traditions or reinforce the cherished values and beliefs, the existence of schools could become empty and devoid of meaning.

Some of these ceremonies are created to pay tribute to retiring staff members while with others it is recognition of past and present heroes who are identified through the value filter. These are heroes and heroines who have done what is worth noting. They can be identified among learners, staff members and principals who have attained recognition through outstanding achievements. Ceremonies for these heroes are for those whose achievements are consistent with the culture. In some schools, former learners who had succeeded in their academic endeavors are invited to give motivational talks to other learners.

The display of student work and past achievements at the end of year function or during parents' evenings, is a symbol representing hard work for students. Parents are invited to such ceremonies to see the learner's books and have some talks with the teachers about their children's performance. This is another way in which a school demonstrates its commitment to teaching and learning.

Certain events and stories of events that happen at school on a daily basis portray a school culture. Through telling and through use, these stories carry value and convey

morals. It is again these stories which say a lot about what school really means and its significance in the life of students. Only those stories that focus on the successes are to be retold such as stories when teachers work together collectively, sharing common ideas or reinforcing cultural values.

Symbols are also very significant aspects which portray cultural values. These are the only means through which abstract values can be conveyed. They further represent intangible cultural values and beliefs which represent what we stand for and wish for. Deal and Peterson (1999:60) argue that symbolic aspects play a powerful role in cultural cohesion and pride.

There are various symbols which are found within the school premises, and these have various meanings. The school with a vision and mission statement hanging on the walls for easy visibility shows commitment and its values. This vision and mission is a symbol statement which further explain to the people out there what the school stands for and what it wants to achieve. It is for this reason that the vision and mission of the school need to be known by everybody who has an interest. The vision and mission could serve to market the school as its purpose is clearly spelt out. The school uniform is a symbol which conveys a meaning that learners are committed to daily attendance. It also unites learners and distinguishes them from others. Students in uniform symbolize pride and represent the school and its beliefs.

In some schools, athletic awards and singing competition trophies are displayed in the staff-room or the principal's office. These symbolic artifacts are not there for fun, but they symbolize what is valued. Their display is meaningful, as they serve as symbols of pride whilst history is maintained. Learners who received awards through hard work, can motivate others to do the same.

The physical layout and decorations of the school environment communicates meaning. A school with a lawn and beautiful flowers planted in front of the classrooms represents the care and attention the students have, but a dilapidated and dirty school becomes an

eyesore rather than a symbol of pride. Anyhow, teaching and learning cannot take place in an unsafe environment. Those schools with good quality fences and locked gates during and after school hours uphold the safety of learners.

Discipline in schools also forms part of school culture because it brings about order. Different schools have different disciplinary measures. But the seriousness and purpose with which the school approaches its task is communicated through the order and discipline it maintains. There is a need to have a fair and firm disciplinary code agreeable to all stakeholders.

Metcalfe (1994:36) suggests that students should be involved in the maintenance of discipline so as to make them develop a sense of responsibility and accountability. She further suggests that teachers may also contribute to discipline through effective teaching, setting realistic goals and presenting exemplary work.

The formation of structures such as the School Management Team (SMT) plays a pivotal role in articulating culture. Such a structure is a description of how people organize themselves, what they do and how they do it to achieve the organisational aims. Bush (2003:167) states that there is a link between culture and structure. The structure has rules and regulations in place to supervise people.

In the pursuit of making an organisation a humane, friendly and equitable place, members of staff should be involved in the formation of rules and regulation. It is of importance that these staff members be fully involved when various activities are planned. The SMT should ensure that they communicate with staff members how monitoring is to be done. Despite monitoring, they must provide feedback timeously. Members of staff need to know beforehand what is expected of them. Whitaker (1993:100) espoused that tension is created when managers try to drive people by tight regulations and procedures rather than through interpersonal transactions which are the life blood of an organisation. Therefore the SMT should be seen less as a controlling body and supervisors, but more as facilitating.

Formal and informal meetings are called by the SMT to transact “business” in school. The manner in which these meetings are conducted: from the invitation of staff members, either verbally or through bulletin boards or by means of the information book circulated among staff members, all these procedures are a signal to a particular culture. Invitations to meetings could vary depending on what a school regards to be of value. These meetings are not a mere coming together, but are of more importance. The nature of these meetings, whether formal or informal, should be clearly articulated because they are rich in symbolic significance. If the purpose of a meeting is not clearly spelt out educators may have divergent meanings, and this can lead to sub-cultures which could spark conflict among them and in the school itself.

The culture of a school is also well captured in shared values. These values define what has to be done to make those involved successful. Hoy (1978:131) states that core values of a culture are the dominant values that are accepted and shared by most of the organisational members. These shared values are those beliefs that have been socially validated through shared social experiences. These values underpin the behaviour and attitudes of individuals though they may not be explicit at times.

Individual values can vary at times and may not always be in harmony with one another. At school level, it may be found that there are different and competing value systems that create a mosaic of organisational realities rather than unique corporate culture; subsequently in big schools sub-cultures are likely to emerge. The external environment also plays a decisive role in shaping the school culture, because it is the source of many of the values and beliefs that really coalesce to form this culture. Parents assume that local values are being transmitted into the school and that some connection with tradition of the past is well maintained. It is because of this view that parents, at times, are not prepared to accept changes, but they may support change as long as things don't look too different from what they know.

Various schools attach value to different things. In some schools, afternoon study is considered to be of value while others regard it as a waste of time. Indeed schools that

honour morning and afternoon study, value teaching and learning. These sessions are well planned and students are well monitored. Some school names have a historic background because they were named after the heroes and heroines who lived some years ago. These names carry weight as they have an important meaning. They provide clues to both learners and the community as to their cultural value. This study included two secondary schools that are named after kings of the Vhavenda people. Patrick Ramaano Secondary was named after the former President of the Republic of Venda and F N Ravele secondary was named after his successor. Both names have historical value to the Vhavenda people.

Norms are also vital, as they demonstrate culture. They are the unstated group expectations for behaviour (Deal & Peterson 1999:27). They develop formally and informally as members of staff interact with each other. They are more visible than values or assumptions but are usually unwritten and informal. Norms are further used as a yard stick to adjudicate on what is permissible or not. They further prescribe certain behaviours to some but at the same time forbid others.

When staff members interact with each other they share some common sentiments, feelings, attitudes and beliefs of how things ought to be done. It is at this point that sometimes these members of staff may reject a certain behavioural pattern shown by some of their colleagues. The basis of this is because norms are used as a control mechanism which approves or rejects the enacted behaviour. Eventually this leads to behavioural norms that gradually become cultural features of the school.

However, it should be noted that norms are hard to change. Thus, school leaders at a new school should first understand the school from a cultural point before they embark on changing or reinforcing the culture that is in existence. The democratic dispensation posed a challenge to school leaders as cited earlier on. It is expected in a democracy that school leaders are to reinforce some of the cultural aspects, and alter some. While on the same note, some leaders are very reluctant to alter what they are used to. The reluctance of these school leaders is caused by their cultural norms that took root before the

democratic dispensation. It is not so surprising to see that some schools are still clinging to the authoritarian style rather than participatory practice. Beliefs are also another aspect which spells out culture. Deal and Peterson (1999:26) define beliefs as how we comprehend and deal with the world around us. These beliefs consciously hold cognitive views about truth and reality. Beliefs originate from group and personal experience; teachers develop a certain belief at school through working experience. Their beliefs guide their behaviour so they become powerful because they represent the core understanding. For example, teachers could have the belief that “all students can pass”.

These beliefs serve as a basis of the conscious mind. It should be taken into cognizance that beliefs, like norms, are sometimes very hard to change. They are not value-free because people interpret things based on their beliefs. Assumptions, too, are a reflection of culture. They are sometimes viewed as the preconscious system of beliefs, perceptions and values that guide behaviour (Van der Westhuizen 1991:623). Assumptions, like beliefs, shape thoughts and actions in powerful ways because they serve as the basis for judgments and deliberations. Thus norms originate directly from assumptions. Also, assumptions may colour people’s perceptions, judgments and actions. The sub-consciousness of the assumption as it operates, enables the person to accept a statement or action immediately as right and good or at times reject without being able to justify rationally the grounds of his statement or action. Assumptions, like beliefs, can be hard to change and understand, as they deal with how people view the world.

3.3 THE ROLES OF SCHOOL LEADERS IN DEVELOPING PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

School culture and school leadership are inseparable issues because cultural management remains the responsibility of the school leadership. It deals with the ability of leaders to know, understand the organisational culture, and modify where necessary in order to meet the needs and goals of the school. School leaders are held accountable to move the process along through their actions, conversation and what they normally utter in public. In a way, school leaders must model the way.

These leaders need to be mindful that the culture of the school serves as a yardstick for the passerby to rate the school as “good” or “bad”. They need to be always alert to the deeper issues, and read between the lines. After doing this, then they should know and understand which cultural elements need shaping, and which ones need to be condemned.

They must always strive to enhance those cultural values and norms which focus on the success of their schools. It should be noted that not all cultural values can stand the test of time because culture is dynamic. School leaders must ensure that they acknowledge the transition. They must assist the school to adapt and accept changes. They must also provide full support to both staff members and learners that changes are necessary in life. School leaders also need to be visionaries. It is then that they will be able to identify and communicate the hopes and dreams of the school. Their vision need to be shared among staff members, learners and parents. This will make them to own and live by it. A shared vision can further facilitate people’s understanding of their school’s purpose for existence, its destiny and what it wants to be.

School leaders are symbols in schools, and everything they do get attention. It is for this reason that they need to be very careful in whatever they do: their actions, how they communicate, how they dress formally or informally, what they comment on and what they attend to. All these activities are important signals that will be interpreted by members of staff. A school leader who pays classroom visits during lessons to support teachers, demonstrates the importance he/she attaches to teaching and learning. When school leaders give themselves time to go outside their offices and start to walk around the school premises to ensure that learners are safe and everything is in order, they show that they really care and understand that teaching and learning need to take place in a safe and conducive environment. They also ensure that the safety policy is in place and it is known by staff members, learners and parents. Those school leaders who attend to the welfare of their staff and learners and give support where necessary, demonstrate that their staff is valued. These school leaders act as healers when they draw people together to mourn the loss of a beloved learner or colleague, hence they make such a difficult time a collective experience.

However, schools cannot work in isolation from the wider community. It is the responsibility of school leaders to ensure that there is support from the community. There is thus a need for school leaders to establish a good and friendly relationship with the community. This will make the community own the school, and so they can offer protection and safety. School leaders could devise various strategies by which to involve parents in the school. Deal and Peterson (1999:132) say that only when a solid and positive partnership prevails between schools and parents, will education flourish. Parents with skills related to educational activities can be co-opted to assist or serve in various sub-committees. Parents' involvement could be in a form of School Governing Bodies (SGB). Therefore it is the responsibility of school leaders to create opportunities to ensure that parents are really involved. Parents can even be part of drawing up the school policies, and also provide input a vision and mission of a school. Sheldon (1992:278) states that forming partnerships with parents could be seen as a necessary part of the possible solutions to the problem of education.

Opportunities should not be created for parents only. Learners too, should have the opportunity to be part of the decision making process in schools. School leaders have the responsibility to ensure that learners are well represented when decisions that affect them are taken. As parents are represented in School Governing Bodies (SGB), learners are also represented in Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) and SGBs in secondary schools. In all these bodies mentioned, members are democratically elected. School leaders must ensure that these bodies are capacitated and know their roles and responsibilities.

The relationship between the school and the community should be based on trust, cultural values and the aspirations of the community. The rationale behind this is that no school should be separated from its community because schools are symbolic institutions. It is crucial that what learners are taught need to fit in with an existing community culture which promotes sound values. Curriculum 2005 has created an opportunity for educators to teach according to learners' needs. A challenge is for them to be innovative and relate their teaching to the immediate community.

Despite the relationship which could be established between the school and the community, various schools attach different values to various things and this makes these schools look different. Some schools have got boards at their gates which clearly spell out visiting hours. This is a powerful message that time is valued. School leaders who recognise time as of value always keep a time register for the staff and learners. This time register is extended to classrooms and teachers have to sign in when they attend their class periods. Schools that value time are against learners and teachers who arrive late. Though time portrays what is valued, those school leaders who commend and recognize or give a word of praise to good work or give a reward to a member of staff or learner for the work well done, give meaning to the key value of what is achievable. A token for the work well done elicits motivation. Rewards can be handed to those who deserve to receive them in ceremonial activities. This acts as motivation for others to do well in future.

The manner in which office and classrooms are arranged and decorated communicates a lot. Classrooms decorated with learners' work and desks arranged in group teaching, acknowledges that shared learning and group work is of value. Office arrangements, and what is displayed, also convey a powerful message. In some offices there are some family photos displayed, athletics trophies, learners' work; all these artifacts signal to others what these leaders see as of importance.

While various artifacts depict that which is of value, school leaders must always promote team work. Teamwork enables teachers to have shared understanding of the school's purpose. De Vries, Manfred and Kets (1999:3) espouse that effective teamwork has been identified by researchers as one of the core values in high performing organisations, even companies that continue to perform successfully have a culture where teamwork occupies a central position. Teamwork is very crucial during a period of rapid changes. Therefore, formation of various teams within the school facilitates their empowerment. It is the responsibility of school leaders to ensure that teachers are empowered at all costs. Trust should form the basis of this empowerment while at the same time educators are encouraged to take risks. When educators are empowered, they will see themselves as

innovative and show less fear of trying something new. In their research Steyn and Squelch (2000:152) found that those teachers who were empowered were happier in their work and more organized. They further stated that teacher empowerment is viewed as an essential requirement for effective school management and managing change.

But teacher empowerment should also go hand in hand with teacher development. School leaders are held accountable for teacher development and this should be relevant to teachers' needs and abilities. It should also be a continuous process and the activities should be well planned in advance. Teacher development programmes are meant to uplift novice educators because they will learn new skills and knowledge. School leaders can conduct development programmes on their own, or they can invite officials from the Department of Education who can give assistance in this regard.

Despite empowerment and teacher development programmes that school leaders could initiate, it is their style of leadership that determines, to a large extent, the atmosphere in their schools. They must always make sure that their leadership behaviour is devoid of bureaucratic practices. They must further understand that their body language communicate more than they can say. Facial expressions send signals of approachability or distance, hence this determines the atmosphere that prevails. Calitz and Shube (1992:30) stated that the results of a good atmosphere are high motivation in learners and staff and this also affects their achievements, attendance, morale, and team effort. Smith and Piele (1997) in Schreuder (2000:26) reiterate that the school atmosphere can either be a barrier to teaching or it can enhance a positive culture of teaching and learning.

Leaders should be at the forefront of ensuring that cultural changes are taking place in schools. They must always reinforce those changes that are compatible with democratic values as enshrined in our constitution. At this stage of this write-up, I feel it is crucial to shed more light on the importance of school culture and those who are working within it.

3.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CULTURE

Wallace and Poulson (2003:228) regard culture as the source of values that people share in a society, and therefore it has an effect on multiple features of the school and its environment. It shapes the institutional and community context within which the school is situated by defining a predominant value orientation and norms of behavior.

It is important to have an appropriate school culture because it gives people an understanding of how things are done. It is the only factor which binds people together and gives them a unique character. It is through culture that school leaders and newly appointed staff understand the unwritten rules, traditions and norms through culture. It further increases the focus of daily behaviour and attention to what is important and valued.

Culture fosters successful change and improvement efforts. Those who are in schools that work within a culture, enjoy experimenting with new approaches. Teachers are encouraged to take risks by trying something new. It is only through culture that changes can be visible in schools because culture is an instrument of change. A typical example is when you change the behaviour of people at school to act collaboratively, you change the culture and the entire school becomes an instrument of change. The documentation and maintenance of the school's history is ensured through the symbolic meaning the school portrays like ceremonies and rituals. School culture brings identity to staff and learners, which build commitments. These people identify themselves far much better in their schools because they easily understand their school's purpose and meaning. It is for this reason that they support and comply with the values and goals of the school.

It is through the school culture that the sense of safety and security is instilled within staff and learners. Safety and security are upheld through the rules and regulations of the school and these are well known by everyone concerned. Since everyone knows what is expected of him/her, there is no doubt fairness reigns. Individuals are judged according to the said standard of rules and procedures.

The school culture guides and shapes the attitudes and behaviour of members by defining what these members should do to be successful. Culture plays a tremendous role in the decision-making process by prescribing the valuable, the proper and the ideal for the group. Shared decision-making demands that people work collaboratively. Collaboration creates a positive climate in which all role players feel they have a role to play and therefore commit themselves to success. Staff members, parents, the community and learners like to be associated with schools that give them opportunities to learn and grow; they prefer schools which are vibrant with new ideas, and that function properly. They look up to such schools as springs of hope. Communities need an assurance that local values are being transmitted and that the future will bear some connections with traditions of the past.

School culture can also serve as a marketing tool. Schools with productive cultures are testimony that they are doing “good”. Every parent wants to bring his/her child to a school that works towards positive results. Schools with less discipline problems are always more successful in their endeavours. Therefore, school leaders must strive to ensure that a productive culture reigns in schools. Though this is the responsibility of the school leaders, they cannot do that alone; this needs all stakeholders to work collaboratively.

There is also a need for effective communication which flows vertically and horizontally. This type of communication can form the basis of a healthy atmosphere which obviously enhances the morale of people. Good communication relations enable people to work within a common set of assumptions, and this makes them to view the world from a common understanding, hence conflicts are minimized.

3.5 SUMMARY

The literature reviewed on the culture of a school show that every school is a complex and unique organization, with its own peculiar culture. This simply means that each cultural picture will differentiate one school from the other. Hence school culture which focuses on success is more favorable. However, school culture had often been overlooked

because it is something that is not easily tangible and recognized; though its influence is quite considerable. Currently the democratic dispensation has conscientised people to view things differently. Transformation of the education system necessitates cultural change in the schools and school leaders are expected to be seen in the forefront of this transformation. Undoubtedly so, culture plays a dominant role in every school as an organisation. School leaders must ensure and be able to discern the culture that focuses on productivity for the survival of their schools.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Cohen and Manion (1996:40) regard research as best conceived as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through planned and systemic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Data collected in this study relied on both primary and secondary sources. My primary data comprised mainly of questionnaires distributed to schools and were directed to the school principal, Heads of Department (HoDs) and teacher. Interviews were targeting all respondents and these form part of my primary data. My secondary data consist of published and unpublished materials, namely text books, journals and dissertations.

Questionnaires were delivered to the target schools personally. These questionnaires were well structured in advance, and all respondents were expected to respond to all questions. It was clearly shown on the day of distributing questionnaires that there would be interviews which will be a follow-up on the day questionnaires are collected.

All three schools were visited in a period of three days. On the date agreed upon with the school principals to collect questionnaires and to conduct interviews, I could not find teachers as they were attending a union meeting. There was cooperation after it has been clearly spelled out that the research was only for study purposes. All respondents exactly the way they have responded in the questionnaires.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

It is spelled out in Bogdan and Biklen (1992) that research should engage in organising data collected, sorting and sifting it for manageability and finding information patterns and taking a decision on what is worthy of presentation as findings.

Data analysis included both qualitative and content analysis. The analysis also includes a thematic process. According to White (2002:82) qualitative research requires that a researcher applies logical reasoning, considerable use of inductive reasoning, organising the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories. The researcher has to make many specific observations and then draw inferences about larger and more general phenomena. After identifying a theme in their data using inductive processing, qualitative researchers move into a more deductive mode to verify or modify it with additional data (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:150). Therefore, in this study, data was analysed for content using techniques such as open coding and selective coding. Open coding refers to labels that are attached to segments of a text and selective coding refers to categories that are constructed into data themes.

In analysing the data I started by comprehending the transcripts in their entirety several times in order to get a sense of the interviews as a whole before unpacking them into parts, and determining the emerging categories and themes. Questions were set according to the categories of principals, and Heads of Departments (HoDs). Responses from the respondents within the same category were clustered together in line with emerging themes, trends and patterns. These were then cross-referenced with the research question to ensure that the investigation stayed on track. The actual names of schools have not been mentioned in data collection, and in the analysis process schools were referred to as X, Y and Z.

4.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of the empirical investigation based on the main categories that emerged from the data were organised and discussed under the following headings: vision and mission statement; opportunity to make decisions; discipline maintenance; monitoring of class attendance; challenges facing principal; involvement of parents and learners in the smooth running of the school; professional staff development; discipline maintenance; safety measures put in place; job satisfaction for teachers; monitoring of instructional teaching and learning. The following is the discussion of the findings under each

category.

4.3.1 INTERVIEW RESPONSES

4.3.1.1 Vision and mission statement

The principals and HoDs in schools X and Z indicated that their schools have a vision and mission statement. They all agreed that the vision and mission statement have been drawn in collaboration with other stakeholders. The HoDs of schools X and Z also agreed that the vision and mission of their school were drawn up with the collaboration of all stakeholders.

The principal of school Y and the HoD indicated that they had a meeting with people from Vanentia mine who assisted them in drawing up the vision and mission statement. They further indicated that the SGB was not part of drawing up this vision and mission, but they were later informed about it.

The drawing up of the vision and mission in schools X and Z was the product of all stakeholders, except in school Y of where other stakeholders were not part of the process. Although the vision and missions statements are by themselves not a guarantee that schools are being led effectively and efficiently, they nevertheless provide direction which can guide the leadership. School goals and objectives should be in line with the school's vision and mission. Principals may have a certain vision of their schools, but this must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders. The principals only act as the guardians of the vision, but they are not perceived to be the sole owners of a vision.

4.3.1.2 Opportunity to take decisions

All the principals in school X, Y and Z agreed that teachers had opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes. They further indicated that there were various committees of which educators were at liberty to make their own decisions. HoDs of the

three schools indicated that they do not have meetings as a department in their schools, but they were having an opportunity to make decisions in staff meetings and the SMT.

The following comment from an educator at school X also confirmed the statement made by the principal: “the management team brings their ideas to us as educators and we are also given an opportunity to discuss these ideas and have inputs in our staff meetings”.

From the above discussions it has been clear that schools are trying to be managed in a democratic way, and participatory leadership is exercised in these schools.

4.3.1.3 Discipline maintenance

The principal in school X indicated that the school has a code of conduct for learners, and there is a disciplinary committee which deals with learners who contravene the code of conduct. The principal further reported that parents are not giving their full support when it comes to discipline.

The principal in school Z indicated that they do not have a written code of conduct for learners. However, learners know what is expected of them. It was further stated that if they contravene the code of conduct they were sometimes given light punishment like picking up papers in the school surrounding. Gates were also locked for those learners who arrived late.

The response from the principal in school Y was that there were disciplinary problems in his school, but this is more visible from learners who are not staying with their parents. This is his comment: “some learners are well behaved but those parents are giving us problems and we find it challenging to discipline them.” The principal further commented that this is a serious problem as they do not have any measure to deal with these learners as corporal punishment is abolished. Late arrival of learners was also problematic to this school but there is a disciplinary committee which deals with all disciplinary problems. However, some parents were cooperative.

4.3.1.4 Monitoring of attendance in class lessons

The principal in school X stated that they do have an attendance lesson register in their school and educators append their signature after each lesson. Class prefects were assigned the duty to ensure that each educator signs. The HoDs and deputy principal were also assigned the duty to monitor the class register. The response from the principals in school Y and Z was that they do not have any measure in place to monitor educators' attendance in class.

An educator from school X commented that monitoring was done and this is confirmed by this statement: "the principal and HoDs do class visits to ensure teaching and learning is taking place." He further cited that each class has a period attendance register for teachers to sign at the end of each period. It is evident that some of the schools are doing their best to ensure that teaching and learning is a priority, and it needs to be monitored. I contend that effective leaders need to know what is happening in the classroom.

4.3.1.5 Challenges facing school principals

All principals in school X, Y and Z agreed that they do have big challenges facing them. All principals had similar problems, like lack of accommodation and late delivery of learners' support material. But the principal of school Y indicated further that shortage of Mathematics and Physical science educators were also a challenge. The principal of school Z indicated that transformation of the education system is a challenge because there were so many changes like the curriculum and other policies related to the curriculum, and as such this need full support from the side of the department. In this section I was interested in eliciting the challenges encountered by principals in ensuring that schools are developing an effective culture of teaching and learning.

Despite the challenges faced by school principals, they are trying their best to practice democratic leadership, although they are hampered by lack of adequate classrooms to develop the effective culture of teaching and learning. It is obvious that very little can be

achieved without teaching and learning material and a well-resourced laboratory. All school principals mentioned the shortage of Mathematics and Physical Science educators seem to be a national challenge. Late delivery of learners' teaching and learning materials was also cited by one principal, and this is his comment: "our school always experience shortages of teaching and learning materials and at times these materials are delivered late while we have started with teaching and learning".

4.3.1.6 Involvement of learners and parents in the smooth running of the school

All the HoDs in schools X, Y and Z indicated that parents and learners are involved in formal structures like SGBs and LRCs. The HoD in school X stated that learners are involved in LRCs which is their mouthpiece as student. All HoDs further indicated that failure of parents to attend meetings were also a major challenge. Although there were LRCs and SGBs at these schools, all the HoDs indicated that these structures do not have an adequate understanding and knowledge of their roles and responsibilities.

The South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996 stipulates that parental involvement is important in the education of their children. Since their involvement will help in the smooth running of every school, they need to form partnership with schools. Parents can be co-opted and serve in their areas of interest or where they demonstrate expertise.

4.3.1.7 Professional development of staff

The HoDs of schools X, Y and Z indicated that professional development in schools was only done through IQMS. In school Z it was further stated that professional development in their school was also done by the teacher union SADTU. All the responses of the HoDs in all schools indicated that none of them had programmes of professional development as their schools. My view is that professional development of staff is the responsibility of both the school and the DoE. It is important that schools plan their own programmes to develop staff looking at the needs of the school.

4.3.1.8 Job satisfaction

All the responses of schools X, Y and Z indicate that educators were dissatisfied because of poor working conditions, lack of incentives and poor salaries. In school Y it was further stated that educators were deprived of benefits like car allowance and subsidies although a housing allowance is in place, this is very little as prices are always escalating.

Job satisfaction is a big challenge confronting all organisations because human beings are dynamic and their needs are very complex. Somehow the government must offer reasonable incentives to uplift the morale of educators. Educators' salaries need to be reviewed time and again.

4.3.1.9 Monitoring of instructional teaching and learning

In schools X, Y and Z it was stated that monitoring was not done at all. Supervision was only done when educators were assessed through IQMS. In school Y it was indicated that HoDs at times control learners' books. In the absence of supervision in classes it is likely that educators might not be doing their work as expected. Monitoring of instructional teaching and learning is important for any school to succeed. Visits by members of an SMT to educators' classes, give the latter courage, and a sense that what they are doing is valued.

4.3.1.10 Safety measures put in place

All three schools X, Y and Z had security fences and guards, and the school gates were always locked to control people who visit the schools. School X indicated that they do have a safety policy in place. None of schools Y and Z indicated whether they do have a policy or not. Safety policies assure parents that the school takes care of their children.

4.4 SUMMARY

From the ensuing discussions and findings of this study, it is important to note that to develop the culture of teaching and learning, school leaders must be seen on the forefront. A school should have a vision and mission statement which can guide its activities, and this vision and mission should be made visible and known by teachers and learners at a school. Despite the challenges confronting these principals, they have been striving to do their best in leading schools, based on democratic principles. One can make an assumption that they were willing to develop the productive culture of teaching and learning and they recognize the need for working collaboratively with parents.

All school leaders should always bear in mind that the culture of the school says it all. People who pass by, can determine whether the school will succeed or not. It is for this reason that people could say “there is no school here” meaning the culture that prevails might not be supporting the school’s vision. So culture plays a dominant role in every organization. Teacher responses give an indication that their contribution was considered and their involvement valued.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Findings of this study are presented in this chapter. Before giving a synopsis of the whole research, through my experience and the knowledge I gained through this studies, I conclude that some leaders are born and some acquire the skills of leadership through learning. I have also noticed that some of the school principals are not leaders but managers; they are good in coordinating the day to day activities but fail to inspire the staff to do their best. It is so unfortunate that schools are not given the latitude to head hunt the type of a leader they aspire to, as currently it happens that the one who performs better in the interviews and recommended by the SGBs gets appointed for the post. In schools, there are people who demonstrate leadership potential but because they are in the middle of the ladder, they are deprived of opportunities to be leaders. Their capacity is mostly demonstrated in meetings. In my view, though collective leadership is encouraged in schools, school principals must ensure that they strive to demonstrate leadership potential so that they become effective leaders and good managers. Leaders must be people who initiate change, shape the goals and motivate others to reach desirable results.

I contend that school principals need to be visionaries; they must have a clear picture of the direction they want their school to take. If they do not have a vision, they will fail to realise the goals and objectives of their schools. Thus, there should be a clear purpose for the existence of a school.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study finds that leadership is of vital importance in all organisations, and that the meanings of the concept of leadership have changed over years. Starting from the early 1940s, leadership has evolved through the influence of various factors such as political,

social and economical change. However, this study demonstrates that leadership has nothing to do with the position power, nor a set of behaviours, but must be studied in terms of the reciprocal influences exerted by leaders on followers and vice versa. Nevertheless, the current situation of collective leadership has brought many changes to schools. The transformation of the education system since 1994 has brought some changes as to how schools should be managed. SMTs were established in schools, and serve as the engine of schools as it is based on collective leadership, while non-functionality of the engine implies non-functionality of the school. Though there is this collectivity, the school principal is still held accountable for all the decisions made.

Some years back it was believed that leadership rested solely with the school principal. Parents were never recognised as role players in this domain, but were rather treated as spectators who only wait for the end results. School principals were doing it on their own, making their own decisions although some of the decisions affect parents. But currently parents have a stake in the education of their children, and school leaders are willing to take them along on the journey towards a better future.

The following are the general findings of this study:

- Lack of involvement of other stakeholders in the formulation of vision and mission was found in some schools under study;
- In all schools there were opportunities for educators to participate in decision making processes, and HoDs were participating in decision making process in staff and SMT meetings but not in their departments;
- In some schools instructional monitoring of teaching and learning was not done; in one school this task was assigned to HoDs and the deputy principal;
- In all schools, shortage of physical resources like classrooms, a well-resourced library, late delivery of learners support materials and a lack of mathematics and science educators were major challenges;
- Lack of parental and learners' involvement in education was found in all schools, and their involvement was only seen in formal structures such as SGBs and

Learner Representative Councils (LRCs);

- Professional development of educators did not take place at the site in all schools, but all of these schools rely on the IQMS done by the department. One school indicated that they also receive professional development from the educators union, SADTU;
- The lack of a safety policy and a code of conduct for learners was also found in some schools;
- Nearly all schools were not doing monitoring of educators' attendance in classes; it is only in one school where this task is assigned to the deputy principal and HoDs;
- Lack of parental support in maintaining discipline was seen in all schools;
- Insufficient knowledge of other disciplinary measures was prevalent in all schools;
- Dissatisfaction of educators due to lack of incentives, poor working conditions and poor salaries was found in all schools;
- Lack of DoE support in all schools through circuit managers was found in this study;
- Insufficient knowledge of HoDs with regard to their roles and responsibilities was found in this report; and
- Perceived lack of strong leadership in some schools.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As I was a part-time student with all the responsibility at my work place, I did not manage to have captured all the data that I needed from the three sampled schools. If I could have spent more time at the schools, I could have done more justice to this study than the few hours I spent interviewing respondents. Distance was another factor as I could not have direct contact with my supervisor for assistance as the need sometimes arose. Also, lack of library facilities was a major challenge, and I had to travel 70km just to access a library.

I further acknowledge limitations with reference to my sampling strategy that resulted in the choice of the three schools chosen due to their proximity. Only a few respondents were randomly chosen and some school principals and HoDs were chosen by virtue of their positions. Generalising findings is problematic as my findings do not apply to all schools. I clearly understand that my chosen methodology seeks to understand the experiences of individuals within their particular context. I therefore hold that the findings can only be applicable within the schools that form part of this study.

Time scheduled for collecting data at school presented particular challenges. On the day of collecting data at selected schools I found that teachers were attending a union meeting. Some interviewees at other schools (principals) were reluctant to accept me before some discussion had taken place. Their reluctance stemmed from the respondents associating the interviews with an inspection of some kind, especially as some of the questions beg for answers that require them to expose how things were done in their schools. But after I assured them that it was for research purposes for my MEd studies, and that it had nothing to do with inspection, they agreed to cooperate.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emanate from the preceding discussions:

- Schools should be able to develop their own vision and mission statement that should guide them in all their endeavours, and every stakeholder should be involved. These vision statements should be prominently displayed in each school. School leadership must ensure that the strategic plan of every school is in line with its vision and mission statement;
- Discipline should be maintained by developing a code of conduct for both learners and educators, the involvement of all stakeholders is crucial in the development of the code of conduct. In schools this code of conduct must be well known by all learners and educators and must further be extended to parents. Botha, Mentz, Roos *et al.* (2003:81) state that other measures of discipline like

detention must be applied rather than corporal punishment as this violates human rights. Application of discipline measures must be fair and must embrace the clear rehabilitative and remedial aspects.

- Participatory decision making is crucial in every organization. Educators must always be granted opportunities to make input as this has all sorts of benefits to both the leadership and learners. It is the responsibility of the school principal to always encourage educators to participate in decision making. But however, principals must be able to discern the decisions which require the involvement of educators to avoid wasting of time.
- Parents should be involved as much as possible in the education of their children, as their involvement can minimize disciplinary problems and make a contribution to the smooth running of the school. Cattermole and Robinson (1985:49) in Botha, Mentz, Roos *et al.* (2003:202) indicate that communication between home and school leads to an increase in the effectiveness of educational programs.
- Programmes for professional development of educators should be developed in schools in line with the needs of the school, and this should be a process, not just an event with reflective follow-ups. Botha, Mentz, Roos *et al.* (2003:114) accentuated that professional development remains one of the responsibilities of the school principal. School principals must encourage educators to further their studies and to attend seminars and workshops.
- School principals should be given full support from the DoE, and continuous capacity building in leadership is necessary. The DoE has an obligation to ensure that schools have the necessary resources to enhance teaching and learning. Delivery of learners' support material should be done towards the end of the previous year to ensure that teaching and learning resume immediately as schools reopen;
- Each school must have security personnel who should search all people who enter the school premises, and schools must also display clear signs at the entrance that any peoples who enter the premises may be subjected to a search. According the SASA Act 84 of 1996 as amended with insertion of section 8A, the school principal has been given authority to search if he/she is suspicious that there are

dangerous weapons carried on the school premises. A policy of safety measures should be developed and should be accessible to everyone.

- The DoE should always provide support to schools in their areas of need. Provision of facilities to schools is the responsibility of the DoE. It has an obligation to ensure that schools have the necessary resources to enhance teaching and learning. Delivery of learners support materials should be done towards the end of the proceeding year to ensure that teaching and learning starts immediately when schools reopen in January.
- The department should try to ensure that Mathematics and Physical Science teachers are appointed at needy schools and colleges must be re-opened for teacher education. The Policy Handbook for Educators B-33 D spelled out that the provincial department of education must explore ways and means to ensure that scarce human resources are shared.
- School principals should acknowledge that they need to play a pivotal role with regard to instructional monitoring of what is going on in the classroom. The school leadership must ensure that the attendance of learners and educators in class lessons is monitored.
- Lines of communication should be open to everyone, top-down, bottom-up, and also horizontal. An open door policy should be adopted in each school to encourage effective communication.
- School principals must always create the atmosphere that is conducive for teaching and learning by encouraging good relations amongst staff members. School leaders must further ensure that they offer personal care to the staff and must always acknowledge good work.
- Those who are in leadership positions should receive capacity building with regard to IQMS. This will enhance teaching and learning in the classroom.
- HoDs should receive capacity building with regard to their roles and responsibilities. They need to know how to manage their departments effectively.

5.5 POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Meanings of the concept of leadership have gone through many changes for quite a number of years. It is for this reason that research in this field should continue. Continued societal change, and political landslides will continue to influence conceptualisations of leadership.

Future studies should also focus on the people who occupy formal positions of leadership within the school. The leaders should be evaluated on how effective they are in carrying out their jobs and meeting their goals and on how they impact on school culture. Further studies on this topic may enhance the quality of effective leadership, teaching and learning in our schools and promote social reform and progress within the community concerned. It will further provide creative thinking of the meanings of leadership in the context of an education system focused on transformation and improve the democratic character of the school environment.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Investigation of the cultural context of schooling and subsequent roles by leaders at different organization levels represents a rich vein for future exploration. Based on my findings and recommendations, this study shared some light on how school can best be managed. In all schools I visited for this study, school principals were trying to run schools in a more democratic way. But through my observation I conclude it is of cardinal importance that the department always engages school principals in capacity building workshops in order to ensure that their schools become self managed. The roles and responsibilities of these principals should always be revisited to ensure that they are executing their responsibilities as expected.

In conclusion, school leaders should ensure that the culture in their schools is conducive for teaching and learning. For schools to be self-managed, the school principal must have the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to become effective leaders and good

managers.

Finally, my assumption is that if school leaders can revisit their roles and responsibilities, and always check as to whether they are executing their roles as required, this will assist and capacitate them to perform their duties extremely well.

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Appendix A

School X Y Z Interview Questionnaire

SUBJECT:

**LEADERSHIP AND PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AT SELECTED
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LIMPOPO**

Respondent: Principal
Gender:
Years of experience:
Number of Educators:
Number of Learners:

Does your school have a vision and mission statement? How was it formulated?
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What opportunities exist for your teachers to participate in decision-making at your school?
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How are learners disciplined at your school?
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Are there any measures in place to monitor teacher class attendance? If so, how is it done?

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5. Are there any other challenges facing you as principal? If so, how are you dealing with them?

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Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix B

School X Y Z

Interview Questionnaire

SUBJECT:

**LEADERSHIP AND PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AT SELECTED
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LIMPOPO**

Respondent: Head of Department (HOD)

Gender:

Years of experience:

Number of Educators:

Number of Learners:

Is there any vision and mission statement at your school? If yes, how was it formulated?

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Do you have any opportunities to take decisions within your department? If so, how?

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Are learners and parents involved in the smooth running of the school? If so, how?

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Is there any professional development of staff in your school? If so, how is it done?

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What do you consider as job satisfaction?

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Thank you very much for your cooperation.