UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Decision Making as an Activity of School Leadership: A Case Study

By

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DECLARATION

I <u>Ronnie Velayathum Moodley</u> declare that this this dissertation has not been previously accepted for any degree and is not being currently considered for any other degree at any other university.

I declare that this Dissertation contains my own work except where specifically acknowledged

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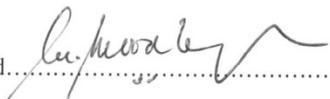
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To my sons: Keveshan and Yerushan for their personal sacrifices and for allowing me the time and space to complete this study.

Dedication
This dissertation is dedicated to my late Dad who has instilled in me a desire to be a lifelong learner

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this enquiry is to explore how leadership and decision-making was practiced across various school structures. The research focuses on the practice of decision making as an element of distributed leadership, its degree of distribution, as well as its development and enhancement. In focusing on decision-making, the challenges experienced by both the school management as well level one educators in the advancement of distributed decision making is documented.

The study was conducted within a qualitative interpretive paradigm and took the form of a case study of the enactment of decision making in a suburban primary school in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. Data collection techniques employed included open-ended questionnaires, observations, semi -structured individual interviews and a focus group interview. Data was analysed using thematic content analysis. Significant themes that emerged from the data were the availability of structures and its enhancing or inhibiting properties for shared decision, the principal as an enabler or disabler of distributed leadership, the SMT's support for shared decision making, further strategies to enhance shared decision making and the challenges to decision making. Gunter's (2005) characterisation of distributed leadership served as analytical tools in this study.

My findings revealed that there were a number of decision making structures within the school and the school milieu encouraged the enactment of shared decision making. The transformational leadership approach of the SMT and more especially the principal acted as a catalyst for shared decision making. Despite ample evidence that decision making was shared, the situation sometimes resulted in the authoritarian approach being the default position. Further to this, the data sets indicated that decision making and leadership was widely dispersed; however, the emergent characteristic of dispersed leadership, while present, was not optimally operational. The involvement of the majority of teachers in shared decision making was in the form of authorised distributed leadership. The SMT transformational agenda of inclusion of all educators and the deliberate orchestration of opportunities to empower educators encapsulated the democratic distributed leadership characteristic. Teachers' expansive or restricted level of participation in decision making was situational. This outcome was used to conceptualise a framework for the level of participation in decision making.

Despite, an enabling environment, there were some challenges to shared decision making. These challenges, in the main, were a lack of peer support, self-imposed barriers such as lack of confidence, a lack of support structures from the DoE and time constraints. Finally the study presented propositions for the further enhancement and strengthening of the decision making process in the case school as well as recommendations for further research. No doubt, the case school has embraced the tenets of our democracy and has made substantial inroads into creating a shared vision, through shared participation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Post-Apartheid South Africa has witnessed the ushering in of visionary education policies to overhaul our schooling system. Based on the ideals of our new democracy, flatter management and leadership styles are advanced. Thus South African schools should no longer be envisioned as hierarchical and autocratic structures. The cry now is for leadership to be distributed; however, the culture of shared decision making is a notion not deeply rooted within our South African culture. Using distributed leadership as a lens for this study, this small scale research examined the enactment of decision making.

The purpose of my study is to explore how leadership and decision making is practiced across various school structures. In achieving this end, I have critically examined the enactment of decision making at a public school in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. As an orientation to my study, this chapter brings into focus the context of education in South African school from the Apartheid era to our present democracy. In addition, I discuss the rationale for my study and make clear to the reader my research aim and research questions. I then turn to a brief outline of the research design and methodology employed as well as the theoretical framing of my study. Finally I present an outline of the content of the chapters to follow.

1.2 CONTEXTUALISING EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The history of education in South Africa is one that has been characterised by racial inequality and segregation. The policy of Apartheid education did not concern itself with the provision of education as a basic human right to black people. Instead it "aimed to produce a relatively low-skilled labour force…necessary for securing the privileged position of the white community" (Gerwel, 1994, p. 83). This fragmentation resulted in the uneven distribution of resources that was skewed in favour of White schools. Amongst the Black schools, there was resistance, first to colonialism and then to apartheid and this manifested in a deficiency in the culture of teaching and learning

(Ramphele, 2008) An overt show of resistance to apartheid schooling by the black learner populace was first witnessed in the Soweto Uprisings of 1976. This was followed by a tumultuous expression for change in the 1980's. The beginning of the 1990's saw the apartheid state bow to pressure from both internal and external forces to chart a way forward to democratise the country (Spence, 1994).

In keeping with the rationale for apartheid education, leadership and management was "rule-driven, secretive and a hierarchical management structure, infused with authoritarian and non-consultative management styles and cultures" (Department of Education, 1996, pp.19-20). That leadership was essentially a positional activity is encapsulated in Bush's (1995) formal model of management where "heads possess authority legitimised by their formal position within the organisation and accountable to sponsoring bodies for the activities of their institutions" (p. 29). Further to this, Williams (2011) contends that "the leadership style of the school principal was rigid and domineering; with close and constant control over teachers and school activities" (p. 190). This "hierarchical social relationship, high-handed leadership styles, intolerance of alternative viewpoints" (Ramphele, 2008, p. 115) created little or no space and opportunity for the classroom teacher to enter the domain of leadership or share in school based decisions.

In 1994 the first democratic election in South Africa signalled that the majority of the electorate were no longer prepared to subscribe to an "illegitimate, hierarchical and authoritarian" (Gallie, Sayed & William, 1997, p. 460) government. In order to democratise educational governance in South Africa, the newly elected government laid the foundation for the future of South African education with the publication of *Education White Paper 2* in 1996. *The South African Schools' Act* (1996) followed which is the overarching policy for education. To professionalise management development in schools, the National Task Team on Education Management Development formulated the document, *Changing Management to Manage Change* (Gallie, Sayed & William, 1997). Thus, "a new education system has been developed in compliance with the constitutional dispensation …a bold and imaginative set of policies has consequently been developed and implemented" (Swanepoel, 2008, p. 40).

There is consensus amongst many academics that an autocratic, top down-structure does not support the vision for school leadership and management. Owens (2001) contends that "top down exercise of power and centralised control have demonstrably failed the organisational results the advocates of traditional theory claimed it would" (p. 327). In

support of this the Task Team Report on Education Management Development argues for, "… an emphasis on relationship building, stakeholder participation, the management of diversity, and development". (Republic of SA, DoE 1996b. p. 6)

Thus, at a policy level, the predisposition of the principal as the 'heroic leader' is slowly "being replaced by the notion that leadership and management are the prerogative of many, if not all stakeholders in education" (van der Mescht &Tyala, 2008, p. 221). With this progressive agenda on the table, it is essential for teachers to be brought into the fold of leadership and decision making. Principals of the past worked in a highly structured environment, under exacting direction from central government and, in most instances, did not need to involve others in the leadership and management of the school.   Currently the tasks assigned to principals are far too complicated and demanding for them to accomplish their role without involving other stakeholders. Besides this, policy demands that there is a "need for all stakeholders in education who can work in democratic and participative ways" (Republic of SA, DoE, 1996a, p.2). This not only paves the ways for educators to be involved in decision making, but is invitational to other stakeholders, such as the parent component.

The advent of democracy has opened the way for education to be decentralised. According to the Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development:

> The *South African Schools' Act* places us firmly on the road to a school based system of education management: schools will increasingly come to manage themselves. This implies a profound change in the culture and practice of schools. The extent to which schools are able to make the necessary change will depend largely on the nature and quality of their internal management (Republic of SA, DoE, 1996b, p.28)

The School Management Team (SMT) is the internal management of a school. This team comprises all members of management (principal, deputy principal and Heads of Department) as well as a representative from the level 1 educators. I argue in this study, that the leadership approach of the SMT and, more especially, that of the principal is a major determining factor of whether leadership is distributed in schools and the extent to which there is a sharing of decision making. Without the support of principals who have to "facilitate the process by creating the prerequisite organisational conditions and climate and by providing the required support to unleash the kinetic and potential energy of leadership" (Williams, 2011, p. 192) the distribution of leadership will be derailed.

The South African Schools Act (1996) was "merely as a framework of education transformation" (Kgobe, 2003, p. 328) and not much change was expected to take place and it was left to the "governing bodies …to take over new responsibilities" (Kgobe, 2003, p. 328). The SGB operates on the principal of democracy and shared decision making. Democracy clearly defines the rights of individuals as "active participants in decision making that affect their lives" (Lambert, 1998, p.9). However, Ramisur (2007) found that in the majority of schools "parental involvement in school governance was not as spontaneous as policy expected it to be" (p.102). The absence of parental involvement in decision making meant that principals and educators had to shoulder greater responsibilities.

In contextualising the education scenario of South Africa, there is much agreement that policies are in place to decentralise education and allow for greater participation of vital stakeholders such as level one educators in decision making processes. A policy is merely an external stimulus for change, and as much as policy mandates change, this will not occur without the appropriate support mechanisms and a favourable context for the practice of democracy in the arena of decision making. Shared decision making in schools would amount to mere rhetoric, "unless radical changes are made to current hierarchical structures of schools and its bureaucratic decision-making procedures" (Rizvi, 1998, p. 206). With the necessary structures in place, there is also a need for teachers to demonstrate their willingness to be part of the decision making process.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

It is vital that the reader be orientated towards the rationale of a study as the rationale encapsulates how the researcher's interest in the proposed topic emerged as well as why the researcher believes that the proposed study is worthy of being undertaken (Vital and Jansen, 2006).

In light of the above, my personal interest in this area of study arose from my move into a formal school management position in early 1997. Prior to my taking on a formal management position, the entire management team together with the most senior teachers at the school in which I was teaching, accepted the Voluntary Severance Package (VSP) offered by the state and exited the teaching profession. Thus, starting in a management position during this early period of transformation brought me to the realisation that I was ill prepared for the challenges of a formal management and

leadership post. As a level 1 educator, I had very little exposure and opportunity to take a leading role in decision making and this resulted in me having to learn to be a leader and manager while on the job. The lack of skills in leadership and management highlighted for me the imperfections of the hierarchical style of school management whereby level one educator in general had very little opportunity to practice decision-making and leadership skills. According to Heystek and Paquette, (1999) principals were generally considered to be the only people with the knowledge and authority to make decisions.

Now, as a member of management, I believe that I should create avenues for level one educators to enhance and practice their decision making skills so that this provides them with a sound footing to play a leading role in a school. I firmly believe that leadership, management and decision making should not be the absolute entitlement of the SMT and more especially the principal. Instead, I contend that rather it should be unrelated to position and should be an inclusive practice shared by teachers and, where relevant, by other stakeholders. As a management member, conducting the research in my own school, I envisaged that this study would provide me with valuable responses on how decision making was enacted in my school and allow me gain a profound understanding of how to promote the uptake of leadership roles amongst level one educators and in the process heighten shared decision making.

Since the advent of a democratic South Africa, the country has developed a multitude of new policies. Education policies have been overhauled "in compliance with the constitutional dispensation that was introduced in 1994" (Swanepoel, 2008). "New education policy requires managers to work in a democratic and participative ways" (Republic of SA, DoE, 1996b, p. 15). As a practicing teacher, I have come to realise that there is a huge disjuncture between policy and practice and, as such, much of the democratic ideals for schooling and teacher professional development, remain on paper and seldom find its way to the schools for implementation. This study thus explored whether the series of policy changes is being filtered down to the school level and is being adequately implemented. While decentralisation is advocated by the DoE, Rizvi (1998) claims that this practice is not always evident and   this policy-practice divide is not unique to South Africa for in "the Western countries democratic rhetoric abounds" (p. Rizvi, 1998, p. 222). However, the challenge lies in finding resourceful techniques to bridge this policy- practice divide by shifting the ideals from paper to practice.

The final purpose for my research was the outcome of my interest being piqued during my reading for the Bachelor of Education Honours) degree. While teacher leadership has been explored to some degree within the South African context (Rajagopaul, 2007; Khumalo, 2008; Ntuzela, 2008; Grant and Singh, 2009; Gunkel, 2010; Nene, 2010; and Moonsamy, 2010) and passing references were made to decision making, I believe distributed leadership and its associated framework of the leader, follower and the situation in the decision-making process (Spillane, Halverson et al. 2004; Hulpia, Devos *et al*. 2009) needed greater exploration. Further to this, I believe it is important to understand the relationship between leaders and followers and to determine whether leaders and followers inter-play roles and if leadership is understood to be "a fluid and emergent, rather than a fixed phenomenon" (Gronn, 2000, p. 324). In this respect, I believe that this study will add much value to the limited literature on the phenomenon of decision making within the various school structures.

1.4   AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate the enactment of decision making as an activity of school leadership. The study was guided by the three research questions:

1. How is decision making practiced across various school structures?
2. To what degree is there a distribution of leadership in the decision making process?
3. What are the challenges in this shared decision making process and what strategies, if any, does the formal school leadership have in place to develop and enhance decision making?

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH TO MY STUDY

In undertaking this study, my intention was to understand and interpret how decision making as an activity of school leadership was enacted in a school. As I intended to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009), I chose to locate my study within the interpretive paradigm. I decided to design my research as a case study because of its promise to provide thick, rich and content-heavy description of real people in real situations (Stake, 1995). Case studies refer to an

event, a single unit such as individuals, programme, team, intervention or community or an event (Merriam, 1995; Yin, 1989). In my study, the vase was a primary school and the single unit was the analysis of decision making as practiced amongst the staff of the case school. According to Leedy and Omrod (2005), a case study is often undertaken to learn "more about a little known or poorly understood situation" (2005, p. 135). This particular characteristic was apt to my study as decision making as an activity within the school setting required further exploration to bring about a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Since the study was conducted in my own school, I found a case study an appropriate methodology to employ as it made possible the use of multiple data collections techniques such as questionnaires, interviews, both individual and focus group, as well as observations. The use of multi-modes of data collections techniques, I believe, enhanced the trustworthiness of my study and has allowed me to secure a composite and thick description of the enactment of decision making in the case school.

1.6 THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF MY STUDY

The theory of distributed leadership was used as a theoretical lens for my study. Distributed leadership, for Harris (2007), infers a redistribution of power and a realignment of authority within an organization. The realignment of authority is in line with the view of Harris and Muijs (2005) that "distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role" (p. 28). I concur with these authors as I believe that leadership and decision making is not a positional activity. In using Gronn's (2000) activity theory as a framing for this study, I argue that leadership is not a fixed phenomenon, but should be understood as being fluid and emergent. This fluidity or emergent property infers that leadership would not always follow a leader-follower dualism, but rather leadership becomes evident in the various tasks and responsibilities assigned to the different role-players. Spillane (2004), in advocating the theory of distributed leadership, argues that there is a leader-plus aspect as well as a practice aspect. The leader-plus aspect recognizes that several individuals are involved in managing and leading schools and "the practice aspect prioritises the practice of leading and managing and frames this practice as emerging from interactions amongst school leaders and followers , mediated by the situation in which the work occurs" (Spillane, 2009, p.70). Moreover, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond contends that "the execution

of leadership tasks is distributed among multiple leaders" (2001, p.25) which relates to the leader-plus aspect whereby leadership is distributed amongst several individuals. Spillane, *et al* (2001) further claim that distributed leadership is the process of thinking and acting in a particular situation.

1.7 THE LAYOUT OF MY STUDY

This thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter One introduced the study by placing the research in context. I provided a sketch of the historical background of education in general and the moved from an autocratic apartheid education system to one that favours democratisation of schools and in particular the sharing of decision making. Further to this a rationale for my study was provided, as well as the methodology I have employed.

Chapter Two is dedicated to a review on literature both nationally and internationally on school leadership and shared decision making as well as the theoretical framing of my study. Chapter Three focuses on matters relevant to the research design, data collection and data analysis of my research. Firstly I describe the interpretive paradigm used in the study. This is followed by a discussion on the preferred methodology, namely a case study. Data collection methods included observations, questionnaires, semi- structured and focus group interviews. The final section of chapter three focuses on issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations as well as reflections on the research process.

In Chapter Four I present data and discuss themes that emerged from the raw data in relation to my three research questions. In Chapter Five I make conclusions that emerged from my findings and make recommendations for both future research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The process of decision making, which is how decisions are made and who are involved, as well as the situation in which decisions are enacted, I consider to be is a fundamental indicator of the nature of leadership that operates within a school. This chapter focuses on some of the literature, both internationally and within a South African context, on school leadership and decision making. The literature reviewed is thematically based. The first theme focuses on the concepts of education leadership and education management. I believe it is vital to understand the distinction and relationship between these two concepts as the leadership and management of a school will determine the nature of decision making within that institution. I then argue that the amount of space made available for the practice of school leadership is determined by the manner in which the school is managed and more especially led. The review of literature on leadership brings to the fore the need to move away from an autocratic approach to leadership to one that is more distributive. This calls for a transformation in the manner in which schools, particularly in South Africa, are led and I hold the view that the principal is a vital role player of ultimately ensuring that decentralising of leadership is being practised in schools. I maintain that it is critical to make sense of the concept of school leadership which includes teacher leaders in order to determine its effectiveness as a practice. In understanding the roles that teacher leaders assume, it is my contention that the presence of teacher leadership in a school is an indicator that leadership is distributed and that decision making is shared.

My research, with its focus on decision making, therefore extensively examines available literature on various aspects of decision making which, I believe, is essential and will give value to the findings and discussions to follow in the latter chapters of this dissertation. Flowing from a review of studies on decision making, the concept of distributed leadership will be delved into as a theoretical framing for my study.

Distributed leadership is commonly associated with any form of devolved, shared or dispersed leadership practice in school. The theory of distributed leadership as advanced in the main by Gronn (2000) and Spillane (2004) is employed as a theoretical underpinning for my study. In discussing distributed leadership, the rationale for this practice as well as the challenges associated with distributed leadership will be examined. Further to this, the ideal climate as well as how to distribute leadership will be discussed.

Having introduced this chapter, I now move on to discuss the terms 'education leadership' and 'education management' in order to clarify these concepts by examining how they differ and yet, at the same time, reveal threads that weave a powerful relationship that is not easy to separate. The type of leadership and management that is present at a school will determine the scope and the impetus given for shared decision making.

2.2 LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT

Most researchers are of the view that there is no clear division between management and leadership activities and that there is a lack of consensus on the precise nature of these fields (Bush, 2007; Ribbins, 2007; Coleman, 2005; Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997; Department of Education, 1996). Van der Westhuizen and Prew cited in Ribbins (2007) reveal that "whereas some academics view educational leadership and management as the same activity or phenomenon, others separate the two fields, whilst a third group highlight the interrelationship between the two phenomena" (p. 353). That no clear distinction can be made between leadership and management is further articulated by Bush (2007) who argues that the concepts of leadership and management overlap and Grant (2010) lends support to this notion in that education leadership and management are distinct, yet complementary processes. The manner in which education leadership or management is practiced in any school or school situation will, nevertheless determine the nature of decision making within a school. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) refer to this as 'two sides of the same coin' which essentially means that "despite the different interpretations ……..the words leadership and management are often used interchangeably in everyday speech" (Coleman, 2005, p.7), and that "it is important to note that they are closely associated functions that cannot be attended to separately" (Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997, p.32).

That the terms leadership and management fall into a contested terrain is further acknowledged in the South African context by the Task Team on Education Management and Development who "found that the terms 'management', 'administration' and 'leadership' are used in confusing ways" (Republic of SA, DoE, 1996b, p.28). I concur with Grace who has resolved that management is a more manageable concept and is readily amenable to a checklist analysis of operational features while that of leadership is "more intangible" (1995, p.27). Furthermore, Grace (1995), drawing from Forster's observation, argues that since leadership cannot be reduced to management, it involves something more than management. Cuban in Bush & Glover (2003) provides one of the clearest distinctions between leadership and management:

> By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals. Leadership . . .takes . . . much ingenuity, energy and skill (2003, p.5).

On the other hand, management is:

> maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change (Bush and Glover, 2003, p. 5)

I am in agreement with Cuban that both management and leadership are prerequisites for the functioning of any school, however, the attention given to either management and leadership will depend on the context in which the school finds itself. The majority of schools in South Africa were merely managed by principals during the apartheid era and the centralised grip that the government had over the school made it almost impossible for schools to break away from the grasp of the government and exercise any form of leadership in these schools. Today, for schools to meet the transformational agenda of the government there is a need for strong leadership to be practised within schools. However, once changes have been affected in certain areas through proficient leadership, there is a need to manage and maintain and sustain these changes while at the same time looking at new areas to effect further change. In a sense I am advocating leadership before management and not management without leadership as was the case during apartheid education. While I argue for leadership before management, I acknowledge that in the majority of South African schools management is fore-grounded rather than leadership. South African Schools are professionally

managed by the School Management Team (SMT) and thus by its very nomenclature, a mind-set of focusing on managing rather than leading is emphasised in South African schools.

While it is debatable as to the exact nature of the concepts leadership and management, there is agreement that a subtle distinction can be made between these two terms. For the purpose of my research, management will be viewed as the maintenance of the organisational status quo of schools, while leadership will be looked at as an instrument to introduce change. It is my contention that managing a school is not, in the main, the driving force that encourages transformation and the adoption of a distributive form of leadership which make possible the sharing of decision making. Instead, it is the culture of leadership within the school which would enable shared decision making. My study investigated the practice of leadership within the case school and this will determine whether the school subscribes to the ethos of transformation and is moving toward the sharing of leadership or is continuing with the traditional understanding of leadership which entrenches leadership as a positional activity. It is to the conventional perception of leadership, with a slant towards leadership as a positional activity that I now engage in.

2.3 LEADERSHIP AS A POSITIONAL ACTIVITY

Leadership and management as already discussed, has not always been perceived as a shared activity for there are those that still view it as positional. This is confirmed by Spillane (2006), who believes that "leadership practice is often equated with the practice of individuals" (p. 8). According to Bridges, cited in Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor (2003), up to the mid 1980's leadership was focused on a single member of the school – the principal. Thus, "the power to lead has been understood by the majority as positional, vested in one person, and historically male" (Grant, 2010, p.28). Research in school leadership has traditionally highlighted the characteristics and skills of the principal as the sole bearer of authority. Principals of the past were often described as managerial leaders (Yukl, 1994). This type of leadership is often associated with bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations with a single leader at the head that wields and exercises authority (Coleman, 2005). There is an assumption that with managerial leadership the focus is on functions, tasks and behaviour and the competence with which the functions are executed, facilitates the task of others. It is also believed that

the behaviour of managerial leaders is mostly rational and managerial leadership is allocated to those in formal positions within a hierarchical structure (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, cited in Bush, 2007, p. 395).

Within the South African context during Apartheid Education "schools were governed along hierarchical and autocratic lines to ensure that the curricula engineered by the apartheid government for the different race groups were implemented rigidly" (Chatturgoon, 2010, p.17). Principals were thus wholly accountable for all school based decisions and were thus the dominant leaders (Chatturgoon, 2010; Grant, 2006; Botha, 2004). Grant (2010) claims that education during the apartheid era "perpetuated the flawed view that leadership equates with headship" (p.28). Research into leadership and management has traditionally focused on the principal as a unit of analysis. Thus, opportunities for shared decision making were almost non-existent as the leadership style of the principal did not encourage a context and a forum for shared decision making.

 Currently principals are no longer regarded as the only leaders (Camburn & Rowan, Taylor, 2003), and the "traditional heroic-leadership model is replaced by shared-leadership models, which stress the distribution of leadership and participative decision making of the school team" (Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2010, p. 40). The singular, heroic leader or great man theory of leadership is finally being replaced with leadership that is flatter and more representative of the wider school community (Hulpia *et al.*, 2010; Grant & Singh, 2009; Sentocnik & Rupar, 2009; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Timperley, 2005; Harris, 2004). The change, however, has not been overnight, but rather it has been gradual and progressive.

While leadership as a positional activity was acceptable and workable in the schools of the past, it is no longer educationally sound, nor politically correct for the rest of the school staff to be sleeping leaders. There is a need to rethink the traditional heroic role of the principal and in taking the argument forward, Heystek and Paquette (1999) claim that principals in South Africa have been prescribed, to a large extent, by educational authorities on how to fulfil their management tasks. However, until recently they could accomplish their tasks with relative sole authority within the prescribed parameters, without seriously being compelled to involve other stakeholders (1999, p. 191). Thus, a lack of input from other stakeholders meant that decision making was autocratic, rather

than a shared process. However, Pillay (2008) claims that with the increase on the demands of leadership, there is a need for principals to adopt a new style of leadership. Principals can no longer afford "to operate out of an isolationist or bunker mentality with the result that they find it difficult to share leadership responsibilities" (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006, p. 9). Cannon cited in Duignan & Bezzina (2006), argues that "principals, on their own, may no longer be able to lead the complex organisations that schools have become – at least in the way leadership has traditionally been exercised" (2006, p. 10). Principals currently have to cope with the "inflow of information and technology, increasingly rapid societal changes and a myriad of proposed educational reforms from many parts of the world" (Ritzvi, 2008, p. 86).

I concur with the view that the traditional role of a principal, one that is more inclined to individually managing a school can no longer be fully accommodated as the winds of transformation blows through the corridors of the schools. Within the South African context, the dawn of democracy has heralded a myriad of transformational challenges and this in turn calls for leadership to empower everybody to survive and bring stability to schooling in this democratic environment. Thus, to meet the demands of schooling a principal can no longer be the sole authority in a school, instead, leadership as an activity must be shared.

2.4 LEADERSHIP AS A SHARED ACTIVITY

Currently, schools are complex organisations that have a myriad of tasks and responsibilities to fulfil, and principals that still operate from an "isolationist or bunker mentality" (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006, p. 9) will not meet the transformational agenda of school, and in the long term these school may become non-functional. Higher demands placed on principals is indicated by literature that reveal that the majority of principals are inundated with daily administrative and managerial tasks "that typically leaves insufficient hours of the day to complete the necessary heroic activities" (Timperley, 2005, p. 395). Thus there is compelling argument that principals can no longer be the sole leaders of a school. In this regard, I agree with Duignan and Bezzina (2006) who hold the following view about leadership:

> Increased complexity drives those in formal leadership
> positions to 'let go' of the ideas that leadership is hierarchically
> distributed and pushes them towards a more shared approach to

> leadership. It is simply the stark realisation that no individual
> can possibly deal with the masses of interaction and
> information called on by notions of educational best practice,
> legislative requirements, parents and student's needs, and good
> management practice (p. 10).

In addition, Sentocnik and Rupar (2009), reveal that principals do not realise all their opportunities, not only because of a lack of time, but because they have insufficient skills and knowledge. However, by virtue of the position that a principal occupies he is ultimately accountable for all decisions taken at school. Mulford & Silins reject the great man model of leadership and note that faith in a single individual, the leader

> as an instrument for the successful implementation of the
> government's educational policy……might bring initial,
> albeit temporary success but the dependency relationship that
> it establishes will eventually lead to mediocrity if not failure
> (2005, pp.148-149).

Thus it can be seen that a move away from positional leadership towards leadership as a shared activity is essential if we want our present day schools to succeed.

An example of leadership as a shared activity is distributed leadership. Distributed leadership as advocated by Spillane, Halverson & Diamond (2004) and Gronn (2000) will be explored in greater detail in the theoretical framework section of this chapter. Falling within the framework of distributed leadership is a typology of leadership mentioned by Bush and Glover (2003) and Coleman (2005), participative leadership leans to a significant degree into the area to be researched. Leithwood & Jantzi (1988) assert that "participative leadership . . . assumes that the decision-making processes of the group ought to be the central focus of the group" (p. 12). Grace (1995) views a participative style of leadership as teachers' eagerness and ability to realise the potential of shared decision making and their degree of active participation in the life of the school. A participative style of leadership acts as an enabler to shared decision making and as such, shared decision making cannot be an activity of school leadership, if the style of leadership does not encourage and embrace participation of stakeholders. For the purposes of my study, school leadership has been earmarked as an enabler of the shared decision making process.

For leadership to be a shared activity, it is necessary to encourage teachers to be a part of the practice of leadership. Teacher leaders, according to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), are teachers who are leaders who "lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teachers, learners and leaders and influence others towards improved educational practice" (2001, p.17). In keeping with the effectiveness of teacher leadership, Katzenmeyer and Moller conclude that by "using the energy of teacher leaders as agents of school change, the reform of public education will stand a better chance of building momentum" (2001, p.2). Thus, within the South African context, schools are inundated with reform initiatives which require teachers to be ambassadors and facilitators of change. For change to be successfully implemented there has to be a strong ethos of leadership within schools, a form of leadership that is not positional, but shared.

Inviting teachers to be part of the school leadership have implications for those teachers that accept the invitation to be part of the leadership team. For these teachers to be regarded as change agents, Blase and Blase (2001), drawing from Glickman's (1989) study, conclude that teachers should be seen as part of the solution to problems in education and not the cause of the problem. Through a process of teacher empowerment and shared decision making, teachers must be given the opportunity, to influence and have control over events that affect them. Blase and Blase (2001) further state that allowing teacher to be part of the decision making process adds to the status of professionalizing teaching.

There is widespread agreement that "leaders are important because they serve as anchors, provide guidance in times of change, and are responsible for the effectiveness of organisations" (Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 391). Yukl, in Evers and Katyal (2007), assert that "leadership is a process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively" (p. 378) and, in a similar voice, Evers and Katyal (2007), argue that "leadership is the capacity of the person to influence, motivate, and facilitate others to add towards the effectiveness and accomplishment of the establishment" (p. 378).

The literature cited on the shift towards a more shared form of leadership highlighted the pivotal role of the principal and his or her style of leadership as a determining factor in the achievement of shared leadership. Teachers sharing in leadership and decision making will not result in the role of the principal becomes obsolete, principals will still

assume the pivotal role in leading and managing the school, but then the leadership of the school can no longer remain the domain of a single person. Instead, principals need to adopt a role oriented view whereby leadership has to be accepted and practiced as an organisational property shared amongst management, teachers and other stakeholders (Smylie and Hart, 1999). An understanding that principals still have a meaningful role to play when leadership is shared will result in principals more readily accepting the notion of shared leadership. A direct consequence of shared leadership is shared decision making and it is to a discussion of shared decision, which is the primary focus of my study that I turn to.

2.7 DECISION MAKING

Shared leadership and shared decision making are complementary processes. An understanding of the precise nature of decision making and what it entails is an essential point of departure towards examining whether and how shared decision making as an off-shoot of distributed leadership is being practiced. In placing shared decision making in perspective the following aspects of this concept will be discussed: an understanding of what shared decision making is about, the issues around the decentralising of decision making, the processes involved in the sharing of decision making as well as the role of educators in the decision making process in the governance of the school. Added to this the ideal context for decision making is examined, together with the role of the principal in either hindering or promoting the sharing of decision making is explored. Lastly, in putting shared decision making in perspective it is essential to analyse the associated benefits and challenges of shared decision making.

Decision making is understood by Przestrzelski (1987, p.24) as a "dynamic participative philosophy of organisational management that involves selective delegation of authority to the operational level". Adding to this view, Jeffrey (2007) indicates that researchers in general have conceptualised decision making as "the independent influence or control a teacher exerts over critical areas of decision making at schools, for example, teacher hiring and firing, curriculum development, student discipline policy, setting performance standards for students, staff evaluation and budgeting" (Jeffrey, 2007, p. 13). In examining the process of decision making, Gorton and Alston (2009) define decision making as "a process influenced by information and values, whereby a perceived problem is explicitly defined, alternative solutions are posed and weighted,

and a choice made that subsequently is implemented and evaluated" (p. 35). In examining the concept of shared decision making, I perceive it as a structured process which within the school environment involves teachers exercising their influence over decisive matters with regards to the functionality of the school. Decision making is not an event, rather it is a process and often it is viewed as a time consuming process, whereby different activities, taking place at different times can be recognised (Noordeerhaven, 1995). According to Hauschildt (1986), decision making is a sequence of activities. During the process of decision making, the first phase requires that the decision maker has to first recognise the situation as one where a decision has to be made and he must become aware of the existence of different possible outcomes. In the second phase, possible ways of achieving the desired outcomes are searched for and can be a time consuming process. In the final phase, the options generated have to be evaluated against the outcomes they produce (Noordeerhaven, 1995).

2.6 RATIONALE FOR SHARED DECISION MAKING

Leadership involves decision making, and if leadership is to be shared then it must be assumed that decision making is also to be shared. The sharing of decision making is not without merit and there is substantial support for this. In expounding the need to share in the decision making process, it would be unproductive to continue with this train of thinking without considering the justification for shared decision making. In presenting a rationale for shared decision making, Brost (2000) points out that traditionally decision making was used to democratise the workplace and to achieve community participation, parent participation and teacher empowerment. Sasaoka and Nishimura (2010) justify the devolution of implementation of policies as they are "aimed at improving education efficiency, equity and democracy" (p. 79). It is my contention that this rationale for devolution is appropriate when considering South Africa's transformation agenda. However, Odden and Wohlstetter (1995) indicate that in response to public pressure to restructure how schools provide services to students, use resources, and improve student performance, the goal of shared decision making (SDM) has shifted from democratising the workplace to increasing the schools capacity to improve.

A further rationale on the need to devolve decision making to the lower structures of an organisation, is forwarded by Jones (1997), who contends that due to a disjuncture

between educational policy and practice, "educators are now being asked to flatten organisational structures, reduce central office directives and permit employees the opportunity to take ownership for institutional decision making" (p. 76). No doubt in a school where level one educators are part of the decision making process, they usually take ownership of the decision and there is a greater chance that the decision would be implemented successfully. Similarly, Beadie (1996) lends credence to this thought by arguing that "shared decision making can help bridge the pedagogical and political gap" (p. 79). In this manner, educational reform mooted via political mandates have a greater chance of being successfully implemented at school level if educators feel that they played a part in the drafting of the decision. The notion of devolution of power is supported by Rooney (2004), who posits that "decisions are best made as close as possible to the point of implementation" (p. 84). However, she cautions that for site-based decision making to work it must connect to the reality of the school context.

While, one may understand and align oneself with the rationale for decision making, shared decision making will not be practised if those in formal leadership positions do not encourage, support and provide the space for others to also assume leadership roles. Through teachers being part of the shared leadership and decision making process, "teacher leadership redefines school leadership from a single person role-orientated view to a view of leadership being shared and distributed throughout the organisation" (Chatturgoon, 2008, p. 11). For active engagement and a positive outcome, decision making is a process and not a casual activity. An understanding of the how the process of shared decision unfolds follows.

2.6.1 SHARED DECISION MAKING IS A PROCESS

Decision making as a shared process follows a structure that may be formally or informally constructed (Forsyth, 1990). A group structure may involve role differentiation whereby there is an initiator, who proposes novel ideas, approaches or possible solutions. Further to this, there is an opinion seeker who elicits opinions from the group and a recorder, who takes notes. To cater for the socio-emotional needs of the group there may exist an encourager, one who rewards others with praise; a harmonizer who mediates conflicts and a group observer who makes reference to the positive and negative aspect if the group dynamics (Forsyth, 1990). While decision making and, in particular, shared decision making may not strictly adhere to the process or structural composition as proposed by Noordeerhaven (1995) and Forsyth (1990), they provide a

framework for the decision making process and this will provide a guideline for evaluating how decision making is enacted in the case school.

The enactment of decision making at school level is made possible in the implementation of legislative directives. While within the sphere of education, policy mandates are highly centralised, there are however, opportunities for decision making in the execution of such policy mandates, which is extremely localised and in most instances occurring at school level. Thus, the authority to implement policy at school level is ultimately shifted from central government to individual School Management Teams and School Governing Bodies. What follows is a discussion on decentralising decision making and its impact at the level of the school.

2.6.2 DECENTRALISING DECISION MAKING

The functionality of any school is directed by the national government policy directives. *The South African Schools Act (1996)* is the overarching legislation governing the operation of schools. Sharing of decision making at school level is only possible if there is devolution of power from the central authority, delegating those with lesser influence to make decisions. Thus, the principal together with the SMT have been delegated decision making powers in ensuring the smooth functioning of the school. Within the realm of education, decentralisation refers to "the transfer of power over educational policy and practice from the central authority to lower levels of authority, such as local levels of authority, and thereafter, to schools" (Addi-Raccah & Gavish, 2010, p. 184). However, the challenge, which is a focal area of this study, is whether decentralisation of decision making is appropriately and in adequate measures being cascaded to the school level. If, this the case, the research explores whether the head of the school takes the initiative to distribute leadership.

The argument on the degree to which schools ought to be centralised or decentralised is taken up by Ingersoll (1996) and he identifies an area of disagreement with regards to the cause of inefficiency and disarray in the operation of a school. His research aims to clarify "whether decentralisation or centralisation has a positive or negative impact on how well schools function" (Ingersoll, 1996, p. 160). The debate on the impact of decentralising decision making is taken up by other researchers who extol its virtues and, at the same time, signal cautiousness in its implementation (Hansen, 2005; Brost, 2000; Jones 1997; Wall & Rinehart, 1997; Beadie, 1996).

While there is a call for cautiousness in the implementation of decentralised decision making, Clark and Clark, cited in Bryant (2003), indicate that in a decentralised system leaders emerge and play a role at every level of the organisation so that the organisation is able to use the full energy of all followers in achieving it goals. Jeffrey (2007) notes that when authority is devolved resulting in decentralised decision making, the result is an improved organisational performance. She, however, advises caution over this view as centralised decision making has a number of advantages as well. In centralised decision-making, there is evidence of better co-ordination of control, visible and traceable responsibility, especially when decisions are neglected or results in poor outcomes it is easy to track those who are responsible. Furthermore centralised decision making has the means to respond to environmental uncertainty with speed and efficiency. On the downside, centralised decision making may lead to duplication of decisions, thus making subordinates redundant. Also there are huge costs implications due to the cascading of information especially as the practitioner of the decision may not always be located at the point of decision making (Jeffrey, 2007).

Chikoko (2009) proclaims that decentralising decision making is viewed as an internationally acclaimed educational reform. With regards to the advantages of decentralised decision making, the flow of information is viewed as vitally important. Costs can be saved if decisions are made and effected on site, especially if the personnel have the capacity and relevant information. Jeffrey (2007) supports the notion that decentralised decision making by employees engenders greater gratification, commitment and control, which in turn results in greater organisational efficacy. If the aim of the government is to achieve all of the above, thus, appropriate policies need to be put in place to achieve these ends.

As my study aimed at highlighting the challenges to the sharing of decision making, it is relevant to understand the concept of decentralised decision making. Shared decision making cannot be practiced in a context that is not supportive of this activity, thus the government's stance towards decentralised decision making is implied in its policy imperatives which can either hinder or support the sharing of decision making at the various levels of governance, leadership and management.

Often there is a disjuncture between policy a practice and the environment for the practice of a mandate is in part responsible for determining the successful, partial or non-implementation of gazetted prescripts. Decentralisation entails the sharing at

decision making at the site of implementation and it is to the environment for shared decision making that I now turn.

2.6.3 ENVIRONMENT FOR SHARED DECISION MAKING

Decision making can only thrive given that particular conditions and attitudes are present in any given context. The discussion to follow examines the ideal context for the practice of shared decision making. Teachers that are engaged in the practice of shared leadership should have a sense of humility and modesty. The driving force for participating in decision making should not be to enhance one's status or the perks and those already in formal management positions should be willing to surrender the limelight. Some of the key factors considered to be conducive to shared leadership include a collaborative culture with motivated staff members who are supported and enabled to take risks (Richie and Woods, 2007). While the characteristics provided by Richie and Woods (2007) are not exhaustive, they provides a clear description of a learning organisation that embraces and practices leadership that is distributed.

Policy usually mandates a change in the formal structures of the school and redefines the role of the principal to accommodate the decentralisation of decision making. However, Hull and Adams (1981) argue that while formal structures are important for shared decision making, it is the school climate that influences the manner in which decision making occurs. They provide a list of features that typify the climate in which decision making occurs. These include the extent to which staff are able to work together as well as the amount of mutual trust and professional and personal support and encouragement among staff. In addition the degree of job satisfaction and conflict resolution strategies determine the climate for decision making. Like Hull and Adams (1981), Grace (1995) argues that shared decision making cannot be solely attributed to the initiative of the principal; rather, the participative style of educators is also instrumental to its realisation. In the case of teachers' participative styles, it refers to the willingness and capacity of teachers to fully exploit the context for the enactment of shared decision making.

This study sought to analyse, through the various data collection methods employed, whether the above conditions exist in the case study school and whether they foster the practice of shared decision making. The degree to which these conditions exist will indicate the extent to which shared decision can be practiced.

The context in which shared decision making occurs necessitates that certain attitudes, structures and processes are in place. Jeffrey (2007) is of the view that that a means of increasing decentralised decision making is to is to increase the actual decision influence of members within the organisation that occupy the lower rungs of the organisation, especially those at the level of service delivery. Leithwood and Jantzi (1998) argue that for decision making to positively influence school outcomes, the nature and the quality of information gathered for decision making and the manner in which it is utilised is vital.

In creating a favourable climate and engaging in areas that allow for the sharing of decision making, the attitude of the school management and more especially, the principal is vital in supporting and maintaining the appropriate context as well as facilitating the participation of the staff in decision making. The role of the head in shared decision making is investigated in the section to follow.

2.6.4 THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN SHARED DECISION MAKING

The level to which decision making is shared, if it is shared at all, is very much dependent on the head of the school and thus in "recent years the role of the principal has come to be seen as critical in implementing shared decision making" (Blase & Blase, 2001, p.1). Principals are faced with the challenge of tapping teachers' expertise and experience to facilitate shared decision making (Blase & Blase, 2001). Principals not only maximize the operation of the school by utilizing teacher leaders according to their talents and interests, but also allow teachers to experience a sense of achievement (Lovely, 2005).

Principals who advance teacher empowerment through shared decision making possess particular character traits. According to the literature, such principals are visionary, provide teacher recognition, are visible, are decisive, support shared decision making and demonstrate trust (Clift, Veal, Holland, Johnson & McCarthy, 2005; Hatcher, 2005; Blase and Blase, 2001; Melenyzer, 1990). The principal's trust and respect for teachers is a prerequisite for teachers engaging in shared decision making (Melenyzer, 1990). Furthermore principals are required to demonstrate their support for staff development and decisions taken by teachers. In addition principals are required to allocate adequate time for teachers to collaborate and share in decision making (Blase and Blase, 2001). In essence, the role of the principal in decision making is to facilitate change, and not be the sole authority or policy maker. To accomplish this, principals need to be "reflective,

open to change, and a risk taker" (Clift *et al*, 2005, p. 101). In the practice of school leadership, the role of the principal is critical because s/he is the decisive link between government policies for school transformation and its implementation in schools (Hatcher, 2005).

Before a school engages in shared decision making, Blase and Blase (2001) advocate that principals together with teachers and school governance structures should consider essential criterion to facilitate the transition towards shared decision making. Before engaging in shared decision making there is a need to understand the motive for this action, contextual factors that might complicate the effort to share decision making, and existing barriers to shared decision making within an institution. Similarly in line with Blase and Blase's thinking Botha indicated that the "principal was the most important and essential stakeholder" for effective shared decision making (2006, p.351). Thus, as much as the necessary conditions as well as the support structures are in place to practice shared decision making, there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of this practice against the school and learner performance. While shared decision making promotes leadership, the question of whether it has a knock-on effect on teaching and learning needs to be examined.

2.6.5 ADVANTAGES OF SHARED DECISION MAKING

There is much debate on the value of shared decision making. Further to this, shared decision making and its links to the promotion of democracy and a collaborative working environment is investigated. The move towards decentralisation of decision making requires a style of leadership by principals as well as schools providing the context and opportunities for educators to share in decision making must have as its ultimate aim a more effective teaching and learning process. Increased participation of educators in decision making will be of little value if it does not impact positively on the teaching and learning process. Thus, it is essential that resultant benefits or lack thereof in sharing decision making is delved to provide an indication of whether the hype created over sharing decision making at a school level is valid, or far too much importance is placed on sharing of decision making as a means of democratising our schools.

As a means of democratising our schools, "education leaders are now being asked to surrender power and share power with rather than holding power over teachers in the belief that this power sharing will release the great potential of teachers to effect

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improvements of schools and student achievements" (Blase & Blase, 2001, p.5). However, research has indicated that there is little empirical evidence to suggest that there is a positive correlation between shared decision making and student performance (Blase and Blase, 2001; Lashway, 1997; Weiss, 1990). Weiss (1990) accordingly suggests that one possible reason for this is that shared decision making has not been properly implemented. Teachers are of the opinion that they devote much time and energy to trivial decisions instead of giving attention to matters which they consider vital.

While there are studies that indicate that shared decision making does very little to upgrade student achievement, there are other researchers, such as Calhoun & Allen, and Newmann cited in Blase and Blase (2001), who identify a positive relationship between shared decision making and student achievement. For shared decision making to be practised there is a need for a collaborative working environment. A large national survey in the United States conducted by Newman and Wehlage (1995) disclosed that in schools where collaborative work cultures foster professional learning communities, there is an increase in learner performance. Rice and Schneider cited in Blase and Blase (2001) report that "greater participation in decision making yields greater productivity, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment" (p. 153). In addition, shared governance and decision generates a commune of leaders who demonstrate independence, interdependence and resourcefulness (Blase and Blase, 2001). Blase and Blase report that in the United States throughout the 1990s education leaders have been advised to "share power rather than holding power over teachers in the belief that this power sharing will release the great potential of teachers to effect the improvement of schools and student achievement" (2001, p. 5). To this effect the role of the principal as an effective leader in the shared decision making process "is now widely regarded as a pivotal and essential dimension contributing to a successful relationship between SBM and school improvement" (Botha, 2006, p. 34)

Gorton and Alston's (2009) research has indicated that the benefits of using shared decision making approach in terms of outcomes is not conclusive and this is further articulated by Davies *et al* cited in Chikoko (2009) who stress that "there is no automatic link between decentralisation and improvement of quality" (p.210). However, studies conducted by Straus (1996) reveal that students' achievement in Mathematics and teacher morale were significantly higher in the five schools in her study that looked at educators who were involved in shared decision making. Furthermore, amongst

teachers shared decision making resulted in a positive morale and greater job satisfaction. In addition better decisions were usually taken when teachers share formal and informal knowledge, creative ideas and experience (Blase & Blase, 2001). However, despite these advantages of shared decision-making, there are some major challenges to the process as well. It is to an examination of some of these challenges that I now turn.

2.6.6 CHALLENGES TO SHARED DECISION MAKING

In my discussion of shared decision making thus far, I have argued for a need for shared decision making , examined the process involved in shared decision making as well as delved into the opportunities available for shared decision making and assessed the role the principal can play in advancing this practice and the value of practising shared decision making. However, in practice, shared decision making may never take off if one does not consider the impediments to its practice. An understanding of the challenges of shared decision making will better prepare one to overcome or avoid the roadblock to sharing decision making.

In relation to shared decision-making, the principal is sometimes placed in a vulnerable position as there is tension between the need to 'let go' and the desire to 'hold on'. The issue of accountability versus the need to relinquish authority plays heavily on the head of a school (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008; Harris & Muijs, 2005; MacBeath, 2005). Principals fear that relying too heavily on teachers may not only cause them to lose control, but is also perceived as an indication of their limitation or poor reflection of their abilities if a teacher makes mistakes. I concur with Lovely (2005) that using such an argument to exclude teachers from shared decision making is both demeaning and counterproductive. My study investigates the challenges to distributed leadership and the role the principal plays in enhancing or supressing shared decision making.

As much as the principal may be a barrier to distributing leadership a further barrier to shared decision making are teachers themselves. According to Meadows and Saltzman (2002), educators feared repercussions from colleagues who did not share their views as well as fear that their opinion would not be valued. This lack of confidence was, to a measure, attributed to teachers lacking the necessary skills in consensus building. When decision making is shared with teachers, Gorton and Alston (2009) found that there was confusion of roles and responsibilities and teachers found difficulty in adapting to their new role.

Time constraints and teaching workload are identified as further drawbacks to teachers' participation in shared decision making. Some of the research indicates that, contrary to teachers feeling empowered, many teachers found their time consumed by committees struggling with decisions that had little to do with teaching, thus time was taken from teaching and teachers could not perceive the value of their involvement (see for example Meadows and Saltzman, 2002; Wall and Rinehart, 1997; Grace, 1995). Accordingly, teachers complained that they were too busy with the day to day routine to think beyond this period (Saltzman, 2002). In addition the process of shared decision making was not only cumbersome and time consuming, but involved an increase in teachers' workload pressure (Grace, 1995), which Griffin (1995) refer to as decision making overload.

Moreover, there were many problems associated with the implementation of shared decision making and that the rhetoric surrounding shared decision making is often greater than its substance (Saltzman, 2002). While I have highlighted the merits surrounding shared decision making, within the South African context and noting that schools are operating within this fledgling democracy it is safe to assume that the majority of schools the rhetoric of shared decision is indeed greater that its substance. Of interest would be the result of this phenomenon in the case school of whether it is succumbing to the rhetoric or bucking the trend.

2.7 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

There appears to be a degree of consensus among researchers that the meaning of distributed leadership has not been completely conceptualised. (Hulpia, *et al*, 2010; Harris & Spillane, 2008; De Lima, 2008 and Hartley, 2007) Hartley admits that "distributed leadership is somewhat confusing" and "this lack of conceptual clarity does not allow for clear operationalisation of the concept in empirical practice" (Hartley, 2007, p. 202). Notwithstanding the argument over its meaning, distributed leadership is presently "in vogue" (Harris, 2004a, p. 13) and " a hot item in the educational management literature" (Hulpia, *et al*, 2010, p. 46).

While it is acknowledged that distributed leadership "is the idea of the moment" (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p.31), distributed leadership is not a new idea and has been advocated since the early 1980s as a means of sharing the workload (Whitaker, 1983).

The National College of School Leadership (NCSL) in the United Kingdom commissioned a review of the literature on distributed leadership. This review carried out by Bennett, Wise, Woods and Harvey (2003), throws a spotlight on a common understanding of the term distributed leadership.   While Bennett, *et al* (2003) concluded that there are disparate definitions of distributed leadership, they suggest that there are three distinctive elements of the concept of distributed leadership.   They suggest that, in the first instance, distributed leadership underscores "leadership as an emergent property of a group of networks of interacting individuals" (Bennett *et al* 2003, p.7) which stress that leadership does not arise from individuals, but rather surfaces through the interactions of individuals.   Secondly, for them, the notion of distributed leadership implies "openness of the boundaries of leadership" (2003, p.7) indicating that the leadership base should be widened to include other members of the school community, not limited to educators only.   Lastly, they are of the view that "distributed leadership entails the view that varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few" (2003, p.7). This stance is further articulated by Hulpia, Devos & Van Keer, 2010 who contend that "the focus is on the cooperation of the leadership team as a whole" (2010, p. 41).   This would thus, entail a careful examination of the leadership tasks involved within teachers' responsibilities and the link between the macro and micro activities and processes.   This further suggests that the task-definition must be made throughout the school and include even those occupying informal leadership positions (Bennett *et al*, 2003, p.23).   This is a useful starting point in understanding the concept of distributed leadership and I fully support Bennett *et al's* (2003) take that the concept distributed leadership comprises distinguishing components and my study will undertake to determine whether these elements are present in the case school and so declare that leadership is distributed in the case school.

While Bennett *et al* (2003) stresses the three elements for distributed leadership and in so doing suggests a flatter leadership structure, Woods in turn argues that "although leadership may be distributed, it does not necessarily imply an absence of hierarchy" (2004, p.6). Thus in practice distributed leadership may comprise of teams, informal work groups or committees that operate within a hierarchical organisation. With this in mind, my study focused on structures within the school to investigate activities wherein leadership is distributed, the prevalence of hierarchical structures as well as flatter decision making structures.

Further to Bennett *et al's* (2003) characterisation of distributed leadership, Gunter (2005) has offered another three suitable characteristics of distributed leadership, namely authorised, dispersed and democratic that I found as a useful analytical tool. In authorised distributed leadership tasks are hierarchically cascaded from the principal to his subordinates. Such a distribution is regarded as legitimate as due process is followed and delegated by a person in authority and enhances the status of the educator who carries out the task (Gunter, 2005). Such leadership is usually described as 'delegated leadership' and is evident where there are "teams, informal work groups, committees, and so on, operating within a hierarchical organisation" (Woods, 2004, p.6) I concur with Nene (2010) who argues that "delegation may have nothing to do with leadership but everything to do with performing the administration tasks of the SMT which have been imposed on the Level one teacher" (p. 29). Nevertheless, this form of distributing leadership should be seen more as a catalyst for delving into dispersed and democratic forms of leadership.

From a dispersed distributed perspective this form of leadership is premised on the notion that there exists skills and expertise within an organisation that can be gainfully utilised. It is acknowledged by Gunter (2005, p.54) that "while formal structures exist with role incumbents and job description, the reality of practice means that people may work together in ways that work best". Gronn (2003) too believes dispersed distributed leadership centres on spontaneity and intuitive working relationships. A broadening of leadership tasks by including others throughout the organization and redefining roles, power relations in school shift away from formal leaders. Consequently, dispersed distributed leadership is more autonomous, bottom-up and emergent and is accepted because of the knowledge, skills and personal attributes of organisational members who, either individually or in autonomous work groups, develop the work (Gunter, 2005).

Democratic distributed leadership is in a way similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have an emergent character where initiative circulates widely (Woods, 2004) and "both have the potential for concertive action" (Gunter, 2005, p.56). However, dispersed and democratic distributed diverge in that democratic distributed leadership raises issues about inclusion and exclusion. Democratic distributed leadership does not assume political neutrality but instead engages critically with organizational values and goals. It also incorporates a social justice element to it. Furthermore, whereas dispersed distributed leadership consents to the status quo in

schools, democratic distributed leadership challenges the status quo by challenging inequities and inequalities that may exist in the school (Woods, 2004).

In considering Bennett, *et al's* (2003) three characteristics of distributed leadership as well as Gunter's (2005) characterisations of distributed leadership, I am drawn by the work of Gronn (2000) and Spillane*, et al* (2004) who have taken theorising of distributed leadership to another plane.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.8 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS THE THEORETICAL FRAMING OF THE STUDY

The focus of my study was to explore how leadership and decision making was practiced within school structures. In order to guide the research and to better understand and provide answers to the research questions, the concept of distributed leadership has been used as a theoretical lens to explore the decision-making practices in my study. In considering leadership practices, the theory of distributed leadership as advocated by Gronn (2000) and Spillane, *et al* (2004) is advanced as a theoretical framework for this research. Although their theoretical orientations differ, Gronn (2000) and Spillane, *et al* (2004) are at the forefront of the theoretical work concerning distributed leadership and it is to their position on distributed leadership that I turn.

2.8.1 GRONN AS A PROPONENT OF THE DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP THEORY

A leading figure in the advocacy of distributed leadership is Peter Gronn and it is to an examination of his theory on distributed leadership to which I now turn. According to Gronn (2000), the initial proponents of activity theory were L.S. Vygotsky and A.N. Leont'ev, followed more recently by Engeström. Wood (2004) argues that activity theory has its roots the work of Karl Mark, but any link to Marx is often absent in discussions of distributed leadership. Wood calls for a:

> re-appreciation of Marx's concept of alienation, and the challenge posed by the powerful influence of bureaucratic and capitalistic rationalities articulated by Weber, is needed first, in order to help us understand the value and limitations of distributed leadership,

and, second, as a stepping stone to considering democratic leadership and its governance context (Wood, 2004, p8).

As an early exponent of the activity theory, Engeström emphasises "jointly performed activity, the centrality of division of labour, fluidity of relationships, the degree of freedom open to social actors, and the internal dynamic of the activity system that enables changes as small shifts from the present to one of a number of possibilities" (Bennett *et al,* 2003, p. 16). In sync with the ideas presented by Engeström, both Bennett *et al* (2003) and Gronn (2000) bring to the fore the idea that leadership is "fluid rather than located in specific formal roles or positions, blurring the distinction between leaders and followers" (Bennett et al, 2003, p.6) and that "leadership is more appropriately understood as a fluid and emergent, rather than as a fixed, phenomenon" (Gronn, 2000, p. 324). While connections are made between the ideas of Gronn (2000) and Engeström, it is pertinent to point out that Engeström focuses on the division of labour generally and Gronn's take on activity theory is more specific in that it relates to leadership. Engeström speaks of contractions as a catalyst for change in activity theory (Bennett, *et al,* 2003) and Gronn (2002) builds on this activity theory and in so doing infers that contradictions are "part of an intervention strategy for the transformation of work, in which activity theory itself acts as a mediating device for the resolution of tensions in work practice" (2002, p. 27).

There is much agreement that that distributed theory is theoretically underpinned by activity theory (Gronn, 2000; Hartley, 2010; Martin & Peim, 2009; Spillane *et al*., 2004). My study, in utilising elements of Gronn's (2000), activity theory examined the various activities within the school in which leadership is distributed amongst teachers. In doing so, the division of the workload in the various structures and departments within the school has been investigated. It is envisaged that this investigation will throw light as to whether the leader-follower roles are strictly adhered to, or whether there is interplay of roles. Interplaying roles will reveal that leadership is not a strictly positional activity, rather it allows for participation from educators that do not occupy formal leadership roles.

According to Bennett, *et al,* "Peter Gronn's work comprises the most sophisticated attempt to develop a conceptual description of distributed leadership" (2003, p. 15). Gronn (2000), in the main espouses a descriptive approach to distributed leadership and focuses on relationships such as co- or collective performance, and structure and how

these influence intuitive or institutionalise action (Timperley, 2005). Gronn argues that leadership should not be primarily associated with headship, "but in a form that accords more with the realities of the flow of influence in organisations" (Gronn, 2000, p.334). He developed the concept of distributed leadership as an analytical tool in order to make sense of leadership in practice. Leadership can take a variety of forms such as in a hierarchical context or it may be practiced in groups or structures where the relationships are more flatter (Bennett, *et al*, 2003). In practice, Gronn contends that leaders and followers should inter-play roles and that leadership should be "understood as a fluid and emergent, rather than a fixed phenomenon" (2004, p. 324). Implicit in Gronn's (2000) perspective on leadership is that it something that can be shared and allows for decision making not only from positional leaders, but also "allowing and providing opportunities for other stakeholders who are not connected with formal leadership" (Ntuzela, 2008, p. 18). This view is not unique to Gronn (2000) as it is also espoused by Bennett, *et al* (2003) and Spillane (2004) who calls for a delinking of leadership from headship. However, Gronn adds to this debate by introducing the activity theory within the realm of distributed leadership.

In taking the debate further Gronn (2000) advocates the use of the activity theory and suggests leadership commentators and researchers focus their analyses on the actual divisions of labour obtained in systems and organisations, especially on the ways in which the specialisation-integration duality is resolved or plays itself out. Thus, by not applying traditional stereotypic dualism like leaders-follower(s), realistic portrayals of leadership can be attainable (2000, pp. 334-5). Gronn (2000) correctly asserts that the distribution of leadership will not always follow typecast portrayal of the leader-follower(s) dualism. There is evidence of leadership being distributed through the tasks and responsibilities assigned to various stakeholders. Within the various school structures examined, teacher take on leadership responsibilities, either as part of their portfolio of duties, being delegated or volunteering for a particular task. There is division of labour within the case school as the responsibility to lead and make decisions cannot be wholly the responsibility of the head. In examining the task and responsibilities of the teachers, evidence should surface whether there is a distribution of leadership and the sharing of decision making.

Hartley (2010) views activity theory through social-cultural theory and distributed cognition. He further argues that "it is the practice, the event, the leadership activity which comprises the unit of analysis" (2010, p. 144). Woods (2004), indicates that

> Activity theory emphasises social life as a continuous flow of mediated activity, a process of ever-moving relationships between… persons and communities, …the focus of action circulates to one person, then to another according to the social and environmental … (Woods, 2004, pp. 5-6).

Despite the advantages to Gronn's (2000) activity theory, as highlighted, inherent within the theory are a number of shortcomings. Hartley (2009) draws attention to the under-theorisation of the role of power and social structure in activity theory. As much as some analysts of the activity theory are of the view that the social transformation as promised by the activity theory is at most, marginal, my study will test the applicability of the activity theory within a South African context and either endorse or refute the criticism levelled against Gronn's (2000) activity theory.

While Gronn (2000) has used activity theory to generate a theory of distributed leadership, another proponent of distributed leadership, Spillane (2006) has drawn heavily upon distributed cognition and activity theory to generate a theory of distributed leadership" (Harris, 2007, p. 316). It is to an examination of Spillane's (2004) take on distributed leadership that I now focus.

2.8.2 SPILLANE AS A PROPONENT OF THE DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP THEORY

In addition to Gronn (2000), Spillane (2004) is equally recognised as an eminent theorist in the terrain of distributed leadership. Thus, while in essence both Gronn (2000) and Spillane (2004) advocate the leader-follower dualism, Spillane (2006) in addition contends that there are two aspects that underpin the distributed leadership perspective: the leader-plus aspect, which Bennett (2005) argues is leadership emerging not only from individuals but through the interaction of individuals and their practice. For Spillane, the leader-plus aspect recognizes that several individuals are involved in managing and leading schools and "the practice aspect prioritises the practice of leading and managing and frames this practice as emerging from interactions amongst school leaders and followers, mediated by the situation in which the work occurs" (Spillane, 2009, p.70). Moreover, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond contends that "the execution of leadership tasks is distributed among multiple leaders" (2001, p.25) which relates to the leader-plus aspect whereby leadership is distributed amongst several individuals. Spillane, *et al* (2001) additionally claims that distributed leadership is the process of

thinking and acting in a particular situation, as is suggested in Figure 3. This practice of leadership is marked by a three-tier interaction that involves leaders, followers and a situation (Spillane, *et al*, 2001).

SITUATION

LEADERSHIP

PRACTICE

LEADERS(S)   FOLLOWER(S)

Figure 1: Constituting elements of leadership practice (Spillane, *et al,* 2004, p.11)

Leadership practice situated in the centre of Figure 1 is the unit of analysis. Surrounding the unit of analysis is the three key contributors to the practice: leader(s), follower(s) and the situation they find themselves. The dual direction of the arrow suggests a strong interdependency or interrelationship amongst the three elements (Glen, 2009).

Spillane's distributed leadership perspective has implications for research on school leadership and efforts to improve the practice of leadership and decision making. Thus, the framework provides some important leverage with respect to empirical research on leadership (Spillane, 2004). I have found Spillane's (2004, 2006, and 2009) theoretical perspective of distributed leadership as an useful analytical tool in my study. In the first instance I support Spillane's view that in the main the leadership practice framework "offers theoretical grounding for studying day-to-day leadership practice" (2004, p. 28). Spillane (2004) theory on distributed leadership is also grounded on the leader-plus aspect and this implies that with the emergence of multiple leaders there will often be a

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leader-follower role reversal in a given situation as a typical practice of day to day leadership. Secondly, the unit of analysis will be structures within the school rather than individual leaders or small group of leaders. My study appraises the level of decision making within the various school structures such as SMT, staff, sports, SGB, fundraising, and phase meetings. Further to this an examination of the how leadership is distributed in the various decision making structures as well as the degree to which decision making is shared is the focus of this study. Lastly, the "distributed frame also specifies a integrative model for thinking about relations between the work of leaders and their social, material and symbolic situation , one in which *situation* is a defining element in leadership practice" (Spillane, 2004). This study has explored a number of situations that involved decision making. These situations include the selection of head prefects, the change in school times, the moderation of teachers' scores as part of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), the Annual Awards Function, a fundraising event; the Summer Show and Dance, Summative Assessments procedures and the organisation of staff social functions amongst others.

This study, through using Spillane' (2004) distributed theory with emphasis on the leadership plus aspect and the practice aspect recorded whether a number of people are drawn into the managing of the school and if so, the nature of the practice, The practice aspect will consider the interaction between the leader/s and follower/s as well as the impact of the situation on the leader-follower dualism.

Besides the Spillane's (2004) focus on the leadership plus and practice aspect, a pivotal feature of his distribution theory is one of distributed cognition. Distributed cognition is a process of sense making that incorporates situations, artefacts and actions into a single whole (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). According to Harris (2007), distributed cognition is not merely a matter of mental capacity, since sense making and interactions are established through the situation in which it takes place. Thus, besides the use of mental capacity "distributed cognition reinforces the importance of context in thinking and acting: cognition is distributed in the material and social situation" (Harris, 2007, p.316). For Bennett, *et al* (2003) distributed cognition takes into account the people, the history, the events, and the physical setting all as part of the situation where leadership is exercised.

Having examined the theory of distributed leadership as purported by Gronn (2000) and Spillane (2004) it is evident that the leader-follower dualism occurs in a particular

situation when leadership is distributed. Also of note is that distributed leadership entails the emergence of multiple leaders. In theory, the practice of distributed leadership appear to be a model type of leadership, but is there a need for this type of leadership to be practiced in our schools? The section to follow looks at the practice of distributed leadership as something that is needed to address the transformational agenda of the government to some measure.

While the advantages to distributed leadership has been noted and has far reaching consequences for the school, there has been some questions raised about it net value and the challenges encountered in its implementation. Examining Spillane's (2004), theory on distributed leadership, Harris (2007), infers that it is "questionable how far distributed cognition provides us with a theory of distributed leadership" (p. 317). Harris (2007) further asserts that the easy movement of the borrowed framework and concepts from one discipline to another creates inherent weaknesses. In the first instance

> a transfer of theory from one theory to another inevitably results in some limitations of appreciation and understanding, however close the perceived fit … Secondly, distributed cognition is a descriptive rather than a prescriptive theory. While design applications have been undertaken in the cognitive psychology field using this theoretical base, they remain limited (Harris, 2007, 317).

Despite the criticism levelled against Spillane's (2000) theory of distributed leadership on a theoretical level, I still find the theory as advocated by Spillane (2004) and Gronn (2000) to be the most suitable theoretical framing for my study.

2.9 THE BENEFITS OF DISTRBUTED LEADERSHIP

As previously mentioned, leadership as a positional activity has very little room in our democracy, which points to a need to re-look at how leadership is practiced. To fast track the demise of and to occupy the void left by a hierarchical style of leadership, it is my contention that a distributed form of leadership will be an apt replacement as this form of leadership holds many benefits.

A distributed form of leadership aids in coping with our complex information- rich society. Additionally school improvement is promoted as well as the organisational ability of the school. It is my contention that distributed leadership can be readily practiced in schools and this thought is echoed by Gronn (2000), who asserts that distributed leadership has practical appeal, as it has the ability to utilise an organisations accumulated capacity for leadership. Furthermore, schools are increasingly reliant on technology for its day-to-day functioning and distributed leadership is conducive to coping with a complex information-rich society that promotes interdependence and reliance on new forms of co-ordination. This results in the opportunity to maximise the identification of the most relevant information and new knowledge for practical application (Woods, 2004, p. 5).

In addition to the applicability of practicing distributed leadership, Gronn maintains that distributed leadership has organisational advantages as "it enables organisations to capitalise on a range of strengths, individuals to strengthen their skills and attributes and aids bonding" (Bennett, *et al,* p.17). It is further argued that distributed leadership can potentially result in teachers having an influence on their colleagues, thus resulting in an improvement in their professional practice which impacts positively on teacher effectiveness (de Lima, 2008; Harris, 2007; Duignan & Bezzina, 2006).

With regard to learners' outcomes there is empirical evidence that suggests that there is a positive correlation between learner outcomes when leadership is distributed (Harris, 2007; Harris, 2002) with the result that "student outcomes are more likely to improve where leadership sources are shared throughout the school" (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006, p. 4). That there is a link between a strong school culture and school improvement and shared leadership is strongly articulated by Harris (2007) as he contends that "both necessitates and creates a supportive and cohesive school culture" (Harris, 2007, p. 319). There is also the perception amongst some researcher that distributed leadership also promotes instructional leadership (de Lima, 2008). It has been found that distributed leadership is an effective means of promoting change leadership (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006). However, Elmore (2000) cited in Duignan & Bezzina (2006) cautions that "collaborative work by teachers will not, alone, lead to changed teacher practices and improved learning outcomes as there must be a clear organisational focus on large-scale change and whole school improvement" (2006, p. 5). Of the literature reviewed there is clear indication that an improvement in student outcome is dependent on the style of leadership, especially when leadership is shared or distributed. In addition

"there are a variety of studies that show clear evidence of the positive effect of distributed leadership on teachers' self-efficacy and levels of morale" (Harris, 2007, p. 320). Furthermore, Mpungose argues that distribution of leadership to all staff members will result in "heightened co-operation and trust" (2007, p.55) within the institution as they work towards a common vision and mission.

2.10 CHALLENGES TO DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Advantages aside, inherent within the practice of distributed leadership are challenges. Theoretical limitations aside, on a practical level, there are a number of shortcomings to the implementation of distributed leadership. I agree with Timperley (2005), who cautions that while distributed leadership among teachers may be desirable, there may be difficulties involved resulting in "resistance to the idea" (Harris, 2003, p. 318). While distributed leadership have a number of advantages, Harris and Muijs caution that it "would be naïve to ignore the major structural, cultural and micro-political barriers operating in schools that make distributed leadership difficult to implement" (2005, p. 33). Distributed leadership entails a changing view of the school structure, a move away from command and control, however, there are "some inherent structural and cultural difficulties in adopting this approach for some schools" (Harris, 2003, p319) and this challenge to distributing leadership is reinforced by MacBeath, who mentions that "the structure of schools militates against distributed leadership" (2005, p.352). The hierarchical nature of the school structure, with power vested in the headship prevents teachers from attaining autonomy and assuming leadership roles in schools. Gorton and Alston (2009) argue that it is not the function of the principal to make decisions, rather the head has a responsibility to monitor the decision making process and to ensure that the decision making process is operating optimally. Muijs and Harris (2005) further assert that if principals are to assume sole authority for decision making, then the process is flawed. Also "distributed leadership poses the major challenge of how to distribute development responsibility and more importantly who distributes authority and responsibility?" (Muijs and Harris, 2005, p. 34). Besides the principal as a potential barrier, teachers themselves pose a barrier to being an active part in the decision making process (Hulpia *et al*., 2010; Swanepoel, 2008 Timperley, 2005; Goldstein, 2004; Meadows and Saltzman; 2002; Weiss, 2001; Allen, 1993).

In many instances principals continue to be the sole authority of the school due to concerns over the issue of trust which presents the most acute of dilemmas" (MacBeath, 2005, p. 353). Trust is linked with the issue of pressures of accountability and principals who have reservations about the staff act as potential barriers to distributed leadership (Clift, 2005; MacBeath, 2005). MacBeath (2005), correctly emphasises that distributing leadership "is premised on trust" (2005, p. 353).

Distributed leadership is also dependent on the quality of relationship with other educators and management. Teachers embracing distributing leadership and taking on leadership roles do so without a formal leadership title and they may find it a challenge to influence their colleagues or be resented, disregarded or disrespected   because they do not hold any formal authority. Management too may undermine the influence of teachers as they may feel threatened by proficient teachers (Timperley, 2007).

While a number of arguments have been presented for distributing leadership, this cannot happen overnight as there is a need to build capacity amongst teachers to make them suitable candidate to take up the cudgels of leadership in schools. In this sense a compelling argument is made by Gunter (2003), who advises that when distributing leadership there is a need to be mindful of the range of sources of leadership, and that identity is not derived from the role we occupy, but is about what we do and are capable of doing. Thus, when distributing leadership there has to be a fit between role and capacity and in the absence of this fit, there is a need to build the necessary capacity. Lovely (2005) argues that matching tasks to individuals capabilities ensures that every member of staff experience a sense of accomplishment.

Having a competent staff to take on leadership roles is not in itself the final ingredient for distributed leadership to be practiced in a school, another leading challenge for distributing leadership is how "to distribute responsibility and authority, and more importantly, who distributes authority and responsibility?" (Harris, 2003, p.319) has to also be overcome. Similarly, Thomson (2009) notes that there are questions around what to distribute, whom to distribute to and to what effect. If the principal distributes leadership to and responsibilities to teachers, it becomes merely a case of "delegated headship   where   unwanted   tasks   are   handed   down   to   others" (http://www.curriculum.edu.au/leader/school, p5).

2.11 CONCLUSION

Thus for schools to engage in shared decision making, they need to be serious about distributing leadership. This implies that the theory of distributed leadership as advocated by Spillane and Gronn must be embraced and understood by schools and when leadership is distributed, there are a number of implications. The ethos of the school has to be transformed and "requires those in formal leadership roles to in schools to create the cultural conditions and structural opportunities where distributed leadership can operate and flourish" (Harris, 2008, p. 184).

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description and discussion of the methodology employed in my case study research and, in so doing, present a compelling defence for the research strategy used. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) make a distinction between methods and methodology and they label methods as the "range of approaches used in educational research to gather data for interpretation or explanation of a study" (Cohen, *et al*, 2007, p.47). Thus, if methods makes reference to the process of data–gathering, then the aim of methodology, according to Kaplan (cited in Cohen *et al*) is to "help us understand in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific inquiry but the process itself*" (*2007, p. 47*).* Kaplan further argues that the aims of methodology are to describe and analyse methods, throwing light on their limitations, resources, techniques and procedures used to gather data (in Cohen *et al,* 2007) .

According to Leedy and Omrod (2005), the methodology is the "general approach that the researcher uses in carrying out the research project" (p.12) and, in effect, this determines the research instruments that the researcher uses to collect data.   Creswell (2007) adds to this by indicating that methodology also entails the collection, storage, analysis and presentation of information. I believe that this methodology section is comprehensive enough so that other researchers can replicate the study, should they wish to (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).   Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) define methodology as a "coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the 'goodness of fit' to "deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose" (p.36). I find Henning *et al*'s (2004) description fitting for my study and this chapter reveals how the paradigm, approach and methods complement each other.

Accordingly, taking into consideration the definitions of methodology as discussed by the various authors and, in particular, that of Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004), this chapter focuses on matters relevant to the research design, data collection and data

analysis of my research. Firstly I describe the research paradigm used in the study. A rigorous discussion and analysis for the preferred methodology, namely a case study, follows. An expansive segment of this chapter is dedicated to a discussion on the sources of data and the data collection methods. Data collection methods included observations, questionnaires, semi-structured and focus group interviews. A discussion of the different analytical tools that were used to analyse the various types of data then follows. The final part of the chapter deals with issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations as well as reflections of the limitations of this study.

3.2 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The aim of this research study is to investigate the enactment of decision making as an activity of school leadership. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is decision making practiced across various school structures?
2. To what degree is there a distribution of leadership in the decision making process?
3. What are the challenges in this shared decision making process and what strategies, if any, does the formal school leadership have in place to develop and enhance decision making?

3.3 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The study, with its focus on decision-making within the practice of distributed leadership, is located within the interpretive paradigm. According to O' Brien (2001), the interpretive paradigm is a relatively new paradigm within the social sciences that has emerged in the last fifty years to break the constraints of positivism. Interpretivism is often associated with the thoughts of Max Weber who suggests that in the human and social sciences we are concerned with 'verstehen' (understanding), which is unlike the 'erklaren' (explaining) of the natural sciences (Crotty, 2003). The fundamental intent of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. This paradigm seeks to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors and consequently may be described as interpretive and subjective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009). The world, in terms of my research, refers to the case school and the actors are the participants of my research project. The interpretive approach, as described by Neuman (2000), is "a systematic analysis of social meaningful action through direct and detailed observation of people in the natural setting in order to arrive

at an understanding and interpretation of how people create and maintain their social world" (p.71). In this study, the meaningful interactions of educators in the various decision making structures within the case school have been observed, recorded and analysed.

Terms such as 'phenomenology', 'interpretivism', 'symbolic interactionism', 'interactionism', 'hermeneutics' and 'ethnomethodology' grouped together are often referred to as interpretive approaches (Gomm, 2008). This paradigm of social and educational research focuses on social practices. The proponents of this paradigm argue that the model should not be the idealized for universal logic of scientific research, as is the case with positivism, but rather a "model or approach that looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 2003, p. 67). While interpretivism is influenced by culture and history, it nevertheless is popular amongst researchers and "retains the ideals of researcher objectivity, and researcher as a passive collector and expert interpreter of data" (O' Brien, 2001, p.10). While interpretivism aligns itself with researcher objectivity, there has be substantial debate over the "subjective, impressionistic, idiosyncratic and biased" (Cohen, *et al*, 2000, p.313) nature of this paradigm. Wellington (2000) highlights the role of the observer and the difference an observer can make to those who are observed where the researcher's aim is "to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insight into situations" (Wellington, 2000, p. 16). In terms of my study, the subjective nature of the research adds value and meaning and authenticity to the study as it is essential to understand the phenomenon of decision making and how it was enacted through the perceptions of the participants and I fully concur with Pring (2000) who argues that:

> we need to know their intentions and their motives. We need to
> know how they understood or interpreted the situation ... that is,
> the different understandings and interpretations which the
> participants bring with them to the situation (p. 96).

Working within the interpretive paradigm provided the means of understanding the phenomenon of decision making as an activity of school leadership through the lived experience and observations of the staff of the case study school.

3.4 A CASE STUDY APPROACH

My discussion of the case study approach seeks to provide an inclusive appreciation of the case school under review. To achieve this, this section probes the case study as a research approach from a theoretical perspective. In addition, the context of the case school, the rationale for the choice of the case school coupled with it, fitness of purpose will be explored. In considering the participants, the sampling of participants is examined as well as issues of access and ethical considerations of this project.

3.4.1 A CASE STUDY APPROACH – A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

A case study is an empirical inquiry, which focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and boundaries between phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. As such it is suitable for studying complex social phenomena (Yin, 1994). Stake (1995) further views a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Merriam's (1995) description of a case study reveals the nature of what it typifies and it is a study used to receive a deep understanding of the situation and meaning for the participants. Case studies refer to an event, a single unit such as individuals, programme, team, intervention or community or an event (Merriam, 1995; Yin, 1989). Case study research is sometimes referred to as descriptive research in which the specific situation is analysed to see if a new general theory emerges or whether the specific situation confirms the findings of existing theories (Goddard and Melville, 2001).

According to Gerring (2001), the case study approach offers one generic virtue and vice. The virtue is that by paying attention to a single unit, "we can often observe, or at least intuit, a complex causal relationship at work" (p. 215). In addition, a case study provides the researcher with a holistic view of a certain occurrence or series of events as many sources of evidence is employed (Noor, 2008). Furthermore, Noor (2008), citing Hartley, purports that a "case study is useful in capturing the emergent and immanent properties of life in organisations and the ebb and flow of organisational activity, especially where it is changing fast (p. 1603).

The consequential vice is that because case studies focus on a single unit it lacks plenitude (Gerring, 2001). However, it must be noted that the intention of my research was not to make generalisations, but rather to obtain a rich and thick description of the

leadership that takes place within the decision making process. Johnson (1994) further contends that case studies are deemed to be wanting in their scientific rigour and trustworthiness. To counter this, I argue that this particular research falls within the interpretive paradigm and does not have to subscribe to the criteria as purported by positivists and, as Yin (1989) argues, case studies subscribe to their own methodical rigour. It is argued that if a case study satisfies the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding and explaining then it cannot be deemed to be wanting in terms of rigour (Yin, 1989). In terms of trustworthiness, a case study is known as "a triangulated research strategy" (Tellis, 1997, p. 5). By using a variety of collection techniques such as questionnaires, observations, semi-structured and focus-group interviews the richness and complexity of human behaviour is fully explained (Cohen, *et al*, 2009). Thus, the triangulation of data will enhance the trustworthiness of my case study.

3.4.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE CASE STUDY

It is imperative that I identify and provide a description of the case school as this would "help others to draw conclusions about the extent to which (the) findings might be generalized to other situations" (Leedy and Omrod, 2005, p.136). My study was undertaken in a primary school. The school was ranked as a quintile five school which categorises it as a most advantaged school when compared with a very disadvantaged school which is classified as quintile 1 (Republic of SA, DoE, 2008). The grounds, buildings, location and access to the school portrayed the school as an advantaged school. The school is situated in a northern suburb of Pietermaritzburg that comprises, in the main, middle class families. The grounds and buildings of the school were in keeping with the area that it is located in. The school was neat and the buildings were well maintained. Upon entering the automated main gate, one was greeted by a well-manicured garden and the entrance to the administration building. Proper signage was in places which amongst others indicated that all visitors must report to the reception. The waiting area comprised wooden seating as well as a lounge suite. The classrooms were neat with colourful charts displayed on the walls.

The impression was that this school was appropriately ranked as a quintile five school. However, upon analysing the learner population of the school, one realizes that this was not a community based school as the majority of learners came from an informal settlement and low income households that were within a five kilometres radius of the school. The school had a learner population of approximately 800 learners ranging from

grade R to grade 7. There are twenty-three units comprising three units per grade with the exception of grade R which has only two units. There was an average of 34 learners per class.

That this school serviced a population that comprised mainly learners that came from a dis-advantaged socio-economic backgrounds was evident by the number of learners that participated in the school nutrition scheme. More than 400 learners rushed to the feeding area during the tea break to have a hot meal. Further evidence of the type of learner population was marked by the lack of basic school stationery; uniforms worn were several sizes too small and there were parents who were unable to replace damaged items of clothing during the course of the year. Even more apparent was that only approximately 25% of learners paid the full school fees for the year, while others were either completely exempted from paying school fees or received concessions from paying the full amount.

The educator component of the school comprised 22 level one educators and five members of the SMT. Of the 22 level one educators, four were employed by the Schools Governing Body (SGB), two grade R educators were subsidized by the state and the remainder (20) was employed by the state. Educators in South Africa are ranked according to their post matric qualification. The minimum qualification is REQV[1] 13 which is three years full time post matric qualification. The maximum ranking is REQV 17 which is obtained after the completion of a Masters or Doctorate degree. All the state employees had a minimum qualification of REQV 14, with the majority of educators being on REQV 15. Of the four SGB educators, one was qualified and two were studying towards a formal teaching qualification. Seven of the level one educators were categorized as Senior or Master Educators. This classification is based on the qualification and years of experience. The school also had two administrative clerks, of which one was employed by the SGB. There were two cleaners and a gardener.

With regard to my case study, my intention was not to generate a new theory, but to use existing theories such as distributive leadership as a theoretical lens for my study. Descriptive research is usually qualitative in nature as "words are the coinage of the

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[1] Relative Education Qualification Value – provides the formula for relating formal qualifications to salary scales.

qualitative researcher" (McEwan & McEwan, 2003, p. 78). As a qualitative researcher, my aim was to elicit as much detail and information as possible from a range of methods by recording at times the most "insignificant and seemingly unimportant titbits" in order to produce a rich and multifaceted description of the case study (McEwan & McEwan, 2003).

3.4.3 RATIONALE FOR CHOICE OF THE CASE STUDY SCHOOL

My research focused on a specific case, which is referred to as the case school. The case school is situated in a northern suburb of Pietermaritzburg. I am a Head of Department at this school and I have chosen this school for the following reasons: it was convenient to conduct the research as I was based at the school and the collection of rich data through my prolonged interaction with the participants and observations of the decision-making practices were possible. I believe that using my own school as a case school resulted in me not losing essential teaching time by visiting another school to conduct research. It was also possible to negotiate time frames with the participants for interviews. In addition, decision making both informally and within formal school structures was more readily observed as I had access to most of the decision making structures within the school. Such structures included school management meetings, staff meetings, phase meetings, a SGB meeting, development support group meetings, an awards function meeting, school development team meetings and meetings of committees organised for fund raising. To counter the effects of my position as a HOD in the school, I undertook not to interview educators that are under my immediate control. It is my contention that the use of the case study method was the most appropriate means of obtaining a rich, descriptive and in-depth understanding of how leadership was distributed and enabled in the decision-making practices at this school.

3.4.4 FITNESS OF PURPOSE

Methodology is associated to fine cooking by Anderson (1990), proposing that there are various ways to prepare a particular product, and this invariably depends on personal preferences and the purpose of the product. My preference was to design my research as a case study because a case study promises to provide thick, rich and content-heavy description of real people in real situations (Stake, 2000). I believe that the case study method was the most appropriate means for investigating the level of shared decision making as an activity of school leadership in my study. Hitchcock and Hughes cited in Cohen, *et al* (2009) infer that a case study includes a number of features of which the following pertained to my study. It focused on rich and vivid descriptions of events

relevant to the case and there was a blend of a description of events with an analysis of them. In addition, the spotlight was on individual actors or groups of actors and their perception of events and, as the researcher; I was integrally involved in the case. Moreover, an attempt was made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report. According to Leedy and Omrod (2005), a case study is often undertaken to learn "more about a little known or poorly understood situation" (2005, p. 135). This particular characteristic was apt to my study as decision making as an activity within the school setting required further exploration to bring about a better understanding of this phenomenon.

3.4.5 ISSUES OF ACCESS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to conduct a case study research one needs to gain access to the site. Thus, it is vital to identify and make contact with the 'gatekeeper'. Foster (1996) indicates that gaining access to do research usually requires negotiations with a number of gatekeepers. Ethical issues were also considered when negotiating access to the case school. Ethical issues refer to the "concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research" (Neuman, 1997, p. 443).

Access to the school was negotiated with stakeholders, such as the Department of Education, the school governing body, the principal and teachers. The principal was provided with verbal and written assurance that my research would adhere to strict ethical code of conduct for research as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. A letter (see Appendix A, p.125) was forwarded to both the principal and SGB. This was done to dispel any concerns the principal, who as gatekeeper of the school, would be "concerned to protect their own interest and the interest of the school" (Foster, 1996, p. 27). The principal, also a student currently completing his Master of Education Degree at the same institution, did not require much persuasion, and so I was fortunate not to have to painstakingly influence him to allow me access (Forster, 1996). The principal was most accommodating and readily granted me written permission (see Appendix B, p. 126). Silverman (2006) argues that a gatekeeper's response should not be regarded as simply a stage that needs to be passed; rather it is an exercise that provides valuable data on the setting to be studied. The principal provided me with a written consent (see Appendix B, p.126) to conduct research at his school. Permission was also obtained from the Department of Education to conduct research at the chosen school (see Appendix K, p. 140).

Participants in my case study research were briefed on the nature of the research. A letter (see Appendix C, p.127) seeking permission from the staff outlined the nature of my research and the ethical implications were included in the letter. I stressed upon the educators my "commitment to established ethical principles" (Foster, 1996, p.24) by ensuring that their participation was voluntary with an option to withdraw at any stage of the research (Cohen, Manion, *et al.*, 2009; Leedy & Omrod, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Furthermore, I emphasised that their confidentiality was ensured and at no stage of the research report would any indication be given of the identity of a particular participant. Participants would be given pseudonyms to ensure their right to privacy (Foster, 1996). Educators were given a consent form to complete (see Appendix D, p. 128) providing me with permission to use them as participants in my study. Every attempt was made to report my findings in an honest manner, without intentionally misleading or misrepresenting the findings (Leedy & Omrod, 2005).

3.4.6 PARTICIPANTS

An intention of this research study was to access and record as much rich data on decision making as possible. Thus, in order to provide depth to my research, I needed to gain as much insight as possible to the manner of how leadership was enacted at the school as well as the degree of participation of the educators in the decision making processes. Besides wanting to enrich my study with depth, I wanted to also add some breadth within the case school itself. To achieve this, I invited every member of the teaching staff, including the school management, to be a participant in my research.

My participants were categorised into two groups. Three SMT members and eight level one teacher leaders were my primary participants. All consenting level one participants in the questionnaire survey were my secondary participants. Including all level one educators in my study gave me access to their perceptions, experiences, challenges and insights of how leadership and decision making was practiced in the case school. My decision on the choice of participants, as argued by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), was to "seek out groups, settings and individuals where …. the processes being studied are most likely to occur" (p. 202).

The views of all members of the school management team (SMT) was sought through semi-structured interviews, however one SMT member did not avail herself to be interviewed. The members of management, excluding myself, comprised the principal,

a male; the deputy principal, a female and two Heads of Department (HOD). There was a Senior Primary Head, a male and a Junior Primary Head, a female. The SMT interviewed have an average teaching experience of about 30 years. Three SMT members (principal, deputy principal and a HOD) and three level one members were involved in the semi-structured interview process. Five level one educators were invited to participate in a focus group interview. The sampling of my primary participants was purposive. I used purposeful sampling as I believed that the chosen educators, as Silverman (2010) contends, illustrated some features or processes in which I was interested. The participants were all experienced educators with over 20 years of teaching experience and had, over time, displayed leadership potential and had taken on leadership roles. My decision on the choice of participants was also motivated by Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) suggestion to "seek out groups, settings and individuals where …. the processes being studied are most likely to occur" (p. 202).

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In order to find answers to my research questions, I employed the following techniques to gather my data: questionnaires, interviews and observations. In selecting these techniques I looked at 'fitness of purpose'. The duration of the data collection was initially scheduled to run for approximately five months which covered term three of 2010 and term one of 2011. Term four was not scheduled to be used for data collection as this term is usually the busiest term and I had no intention to cut across the programme of the educators. However, unobtrusive observation that did not impede the activities of the school was scheduled for term four of 2010 and term one of 2011.

3.5.1 OBSERVATIONS

The first method of data collection was the observation of the SMT participants and level one educators to determine their degree of participation in decision making across various school structures such as committee meetings, staff meetings, SMT meetings, phase meetings, awards function meetings and fund raising event meetings. The observations provided the "opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations" (Cohen, Manion *et al*. 2009, p. 312). While the data from observations complemented and placed in perspective data obtained from questionnaires and interviews (Robson, 1993), it also provided a snapshot of the participants in action and, in so doing, enriched and provide depth to my findings. Observation took place for

a period of two terms; term three in 2010 and term one in 2011 which covered a period of about six months. The observation periods used fell within the acceptable period of between six months and two years as suggested by Fetterman (1989). In the eyes of the academic community, this extensive period of observation lent trustworthiness to my findings. While the observations were conducted over an extensive period, it was not a wholly formal undertaking as much of the observation was informal. To obtain a nuanced overview of the school, the informal observation was flexible with a minimum of pre-structuring. This; however,

> does not mean that the observer begins data collection with no aims and no idea of what to observe, but there is a commitment to begin observation with a relatively open mind, to minimise the influence of preconceptions and to avoid imposing preconceived categories (Foster, 1996, pp. 5-6).

3.5.1.1 Recording the observation

As part of the observation process and keeping in mind Foster's (1996) suggestions, I designed an observation schedule to facilitate the observation and recording of pertinent data. While the schedule acted as a basis for gathering data during the periods of observation, this did not limit me to strictly collecting data exclusively as per the observation, but I also included data that I deemed relevant to answer my research questions. I agree with Walliman (2005) that "observation methods are powerful for gaining insight into the situation" (p. 287). Through observation, I was able to gain deep insight into the dynamics of the various school structures and the work ethos and culture that permeated the school.

While Foster (1996) has suggested that audio visual recording of an observation is the most comprehensive method of recording, I decided, after careful consideration, not to employ this technique as I believe that making written recordings in the form of an observation schedule is far "less obtrusive, and reactivity may therefore be less of a problem" (Foster, 1996, p. 47). In this way I hoped to enhance the reliability of the data collected as participants were likely to perform activities in a more natural manner, instead of contriving the event because it was video recorded.

One of the challenges of pen and paper observation is that it is "difficult to observe and record simultaneously" (Foster, 1996, p.45). However, to minimize this problem, I used an observation schedule (see Appendix J, p.137) that narrowed my recordings to those events and interactions that were pertinent to my question. This method is suggested by Foster (1996) who indicates that what is observed and recorded will "depend in the main on the focus of the research and the stage the research has reached" (p. 45). To the observation schedules I added verbatim records of speech as well as explanation notes to complement the recordings.

Despite the limitations and challenges that observation as a data collection method poses, it also has a number of advantages. I concur with Foster (1996) that firstly through observations I was able to present detailed information about the workings of the school, which no other method could provide. In addition as an observer, I was be able to see that which the participants could not see or were not aware of as vital aspects of the school context and processes, often taken for granted by the participants. Finally, observations provided information on those members of staff that were unwilling to complete the questionnaire or participate in an interview. Observations were a less demanding means of obtaining information from them.

Observations made with regard to educators' participation in decision making was used to elicit further responses, over and above the responses provided by educators about their involvement in the decision making process.

3.5.2 QUESTIONNAIRES

The administering of questionnaires to all level one educators in my study was used to probe the participants' involvement in the decision making process, the support that they received from the SMT to lead and make decisions within school structures as well as the challenges they experienced in the decision making process. In addition to closed questions, the questionnaire included open ended questions "to enable participants to write a free account of their own terms, to explain and qualify their response" (Cohen, et al. 2009, p. 321). The questionnaires were administered in the third term of 2010. I sought the permission of the principal to allow me a slot during the first staff meeting to explain to the staff the nature of my research as well as administer the questionnaires. At the staff meeting, I provided the staff with a brief overview of my research. I went through the questions with the staff and, in particular, provided clarity to concepts that the staff members were not familiar with. I stressed to the participants that I required an

honest response to the questions to enhance the trustworthiness of the research. To fast track the completion and return of the questionnaires, I circulated a reminder to the participants and clearly outlined a due date. The completed questionnaires provided an indication of educators' perceptions and involvement in leadership activities that were distributed as well as their levels of participation in decision making. Administering the questionnaires first acted as an introduction to the participants of the purpose of my research and was used to inform follow up interviews with the selected participants.

Before the questionnaire was handed to the participants to complete, it was first piloted with a group of five educators from another school. Piloting the questionnaire was essentially "to increase the reliability, validity and practicality of the questionnaire" (Cohen, *et al*, 2009, p. 431). Amendments were made to the instrument after taking into account feedback from the sample group. As McMilllan and Schumacher (1997) suggest, feedback in the form of clarity of the questions, ambiguity in the questions, time for the completion of the questionnaire, clarity of directions and any problems that they may have encountered during the completion of the questionnaire was considered.

3.5.3 INTERVIEWS

This being a qualitative case study, its strength was in attempting to "access directly what happens in the world, i.e. to examine what people actually do in real life rather than asking them to comment upon it" (Silverman, 2006, p.113). Similarly, Potter (2002) questions the need to stray from naturally occurring data and employ contrivances such as interviews. In direct contrast, Bryne, cited in Silverman (2006), provide a compelling argument and asserts that "qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire" (p. 114). Motivated by Bryne's argument, two types of interview techniques were employed in my study; the semi- structured interview and the focus group interview.

3.5.3.1 Semi-structured interview

The semi- structured interviews were conducted individually with six of my primary participants, three SMT members and three level one educators. I chose to interview six participants, which I found to be a manageable number. The interviews were conducted after the administering of the questionnaires, during the course of the fourth term of 2010, during the December vacation and in term three of 2011. The involvement of the

SMT in the interview process was vital as it provided an alternative perspective to that of level one educators on the topic of distributed leadership and shared decision making. The interviews with SMT members brought to the fore their role in developing and fostering shared decision making as well as the challenges they faced in promoting shared decision making. It is argued that in a semi-structured interview, "the researcher may follow the standard questions with one or individually tailored questions to get clarification or probe a person's reasoning" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 184). Data collected during the semi-structured interviews was also be used to gauge the trustworthiness of the other data collection methods employed.

Before each interview session, I sought the permission of the participants to digitally record the interview. The advantages of recording an interview are highlighted by Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) who claim that "it allows you to keep a full view of the interview without having to be distracted by detailed note keeping" (p.129). In this regard, the participants were aware that I was fully involved in the interview process and they thus attempted to answer the questions as comprehensively as possible. Kvale justifies the use of the interview as follows:

> interview in research marks a move away from seeing human objects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations…. The interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data (1996, pp.11-14).

3.5.3.2 Focus group interview

A focus group is a "group of individuals selected and assembled by a researcher to discuss and comment on, from personal experiences, the topic that is the subject of research" (Powell and Single, 1996, p. 231) which, in in the case of my research, was decision making. In addition, as Cohen *et al* (2009) suggest, such interviews produce data on collective attitudes, values and opinions, of a homogenous group of participants. It is my view that a focus group interview facilitates greater participation as the participants will feel more comfortable in a group than alone. In addition, a large amount of data is generated within a limited time. Furthermore, a focused group interview provides insights that may not be forthcoming via questionnaires, semi-structures interviews and observations (Cohen, *et al*, 2009; Leedy & Omrod, 2005).

A focus group interview was conducted in my study with five of my post level one primary participants who were engaged in some form of leadership and who displayed leadership skills and potential. These five post level one primary participants were not the post level one primary participants used in the semi-structured interview process.

The purpose of this interview was to gather additional data on teachers' participation in leadership roles, how decisions were taken at the institution, the development and enhancement of distributed leadership as well as challenges that they encountered in the distribution of leadership. In the focus group interview the participants interacted with each other in addition to the interviewer (Cohen, *et al*, 2009). This interview, due to availability issues, was only conducted in the third term of 2011. Permission was received for the interview to be voice recorded. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and the texts analysed.

3.6 CHALLENGES TO DATA COLLECTION

Due to a three week protracted public servants' strike in July and August of 2010, I was forced to be flexible around my management plan for data collection. As a consequence of the strike, the third and fourth terms of 2010 were dedicated to making up for lost teaching time. Thus I had to honour the heavy work load and the pressures my participants were under and made alternative arrangements to suit them in order to ensure I was able to complete the interview process

The retrieval of questionnaires from level 1 educators was, on the whole, expeditiously conducted. I had a questionnaire return rate of 86%. The focus group interview was the most difficult to arrange as it was difficult to assemble all the participants at a common venue and a common time. For this reason, the group interview was eventually only conducted in the third term of 2011. I did not encounter any challenges to the collection of data through observations as I was based in school and had access to all the decision making structures and casual interactions of educators. Despite the challenges encountered with the collection of data, I managed to complete all four methods of data collection as I had planned.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

A thematic content analysis procedure was used to analyse the qualitative data from the questionnaires, interviews and observations. Content analysis used by qualitative researchers involve the analysis of data to reveal what they may contain (Gomm, 2008) and, to give clarity to this, Cohen, *et al* (2009, p.475) define content analysis as "a strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the content of written data". Similarly, Ezzy (2002) argues that content analysts have a predetermined list of categories, thus knowing exactly what one is looking for in advance. My predetermined categories were my key three research questions. The sources for my predetermined categories were the questionnaires, semi-structured and focus group interview transcripts as well as my observation schedules. Once the data was grouped, it was interpreted and the findings recorded (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). The software package Nvivo 8 was used as an analytical tool to code and highlight emerging patterns and themes (Cohen, *et al*) from interview transcripts. Data were coded by dividing it into parts using pre-determined themes as well as new themes that emerged during the analysis process. This programme is capable of dealing with large quantities of text based material without the risk of human error. The Nvivo 8 package did not perform the actual analysis, but organised and structured the text into themes for analysis (Cohen, Manion, *et al*, 2009).

Gunter's (2005) three characteristics of distributed leadership, authorised, dispersed and democratic were used as a conceptual tool to describe and explain the nature of the relationships and the location of power in the different interactions between school leaders, followers and aspects of their situation in the practice of leadership. In particular, the distributed framework unearthed whether administrative duties, authority, decision making or responsibility were distributed. Authorised distributed leadership entails a restricted distribution of power within the organisation. Dispersed distributed leadership results in a satisfactory distribution of power while democratic distributed leadership involves an expansive distribution of power (Gunter, 2005). In analysing whether leadership is authorised, dispersed or distributed, the levels of distributed leadership within the practice of decision making was ranked from level one (authorised) through to level three (democratic). This analytical tool "mirrors the increased distribution of power from restricted (authorised) to expansive (democratic)" (Grant, 2010, p.62).

Yin (1994) encourages researchers to make a determined effort to always produce an analysis of a superior quality. In achieving an analysis of the highest quality he suggests the researchers' attention must be drawn to the following four principles: Firstly, to indicate that the analysis has relied on all the relevant evidence; secondly, to include all rival interpretations in the analysis; thirdly, to address the most significant aspect of the case study and lastly, to use the researcher's prior and expert knowledge to further the analysis. In meeting the rigors of the four principles outlined by Yin (1994), my research analysis relied on the data gathered from my observations, interviews and questionnaires. In addition, and through the process of triangulation, different interpretations were assessed for trustworthiness. Furthermore, the use of computer assisted analysis as well as conventional analysis lent greater strength to the findings of the analysis. The instruments to gather data had specifically zoomed in on decision making within a distributed framework so that the most significant aspect of the case study was addressed. Lastly, in satisfying Yin's (1994) principles for producing a quality analysis, I consulted a number of texts on data research methodology and data analysis.

3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Validity refers to the extent to which the "explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 407), and looks at the question of whether researchers actually observe what they think they observe. Reliability is concerned with precision and accuracy and measures whether results are consistent and replicable over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents (Cohen, *et al*. 2009). To ensure validity of the research, the following steps were taken in the data collection and analysis stages: Multiple data collection approaches such as observations, questionnaires, focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews were used in order to triangulate data. The purpose of triangulation was to check the validity of findings by cross-checking with other sources of data. Thus, if findings from one form of data are supported by other forms of data, then the validity of the findings is enhanced (Foster, 1996).

My research, which falls within the interpretive paradigm, reflects on the multiple realities of teachers' perceptions and experiences of decision making. This required that data collected from the different sources be assessed for trustworthiness of the collection process. The use of the different strategies yielded different insights about

distributed leadership and decision making and increased the credibility of my findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Prolonged observation over a period of two terms reflected "the realities of the life experiences more accurately" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p.408). Trustworthiness was able to "map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour" (Cohen, *et al*. 2009, p.364). Stake (2005) argues that each case study is unique and that every research has a voice of its own, instead of relying on being interpreted, evaluated and judged by the researcher. In adherence to this thinking, I had made provision for the data to have a voice of its own and speak for itself by digitally recording each interview session, both the semi-structured interview and the focus group interview, and then transcribing the contents of the interview fully and accurately. Transcripts of interviews were checked by participants for accuracy.

3.9 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

In writing on the different aspects of this chapter, I have highlighted some of the limitations or challenges with regards to the methodology, data collection instruments, data collection process as well as the analysis of the data. In this section I examine the limitations and its effects on this study on a wider scale. One of the challenges of my study was that of conducting research in my own school. This limitation was further compounded by issues of positionality. Being a Head of Department at the case school meant that my own experience at the school could possibly influence the outcome of the study. Thus, to counter this limitation, I had to constantly remind myself that, in the course of conducting the research, I had to act as the researcher and not as a member of the SMT. To achieve this, I detached myself, as much as possible, as a positional head and allowed the data to have a voice of its own. I also decided at the outset of this investigation not to interview any member of staff that I was directly in charge of. In addition, to counter my position as a member of the SMT and to minimise a power relationship conflict, I resorted to using multiple methods of data collection including collecting data from my peers and seniors.

This being case study research using a single case, the findings cannot be generalised. However, it is not the intention of this study to generalise the findings, rather its value is in understanding of the complexity of the case. Given that it cannot be generalized, the possibility, however, exists that "others may act on it in their own school and circumstances" (Bassey, 1999, p.53).

3.10 CONCLUSION

To sum up, this chapter presented a comprehensive narrative and discussion of the methodology employed in this case study research and, in so doing, forwards a compelling defence for the research strategy used. I argued that a case study was the most suitable research methodology to employ given that my research was qualitative in nature. This chapter also made detailed reference to issues of access, the context of the case school and a description together with a motivation for the purposive selection of the primary participants. In addition, the four data collection methods, namely questionnaires, observations and semi-structured and focus group interviews were described and motives presented for their use. This chapter also noted some of the challenges experienced during the data collection process, limitations of this study, issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Finally, I provided a detailed description of the thematic content analysis procedure that I employed in analysing the data.

It is to the fourth chapter wherein I present and discuss my findings that I now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data as well as to engage in a discussion of the findings that emerged in my study. The data findings and discussion in this chapter are thematically arranged in accordance to the three research questions. To remind the reader, I reiterate my key research questions:

1. How is decision making practiced across various school structures?

2. To what degree is there a distribution of leadership in the decision making process?

3. What are the challenges in this shared decision making process and what strategies, if any, does the formal school leadership have in place to develop and enhance decision making?

I proceed with this chapter by introducing my participants. My primary participants were three SMT members and eight level one teacher leaders. The eight level one primary participants were all perceived as teacher leaders. The secondary participants were 19 level one educators who responded to a questionnaire. The biographical profile of each of the 11 primary participants is reflected in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

PARTICIPANT	POST LEVEL (PL)	QUALIFICATION	YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE	LEADERSHIP PROFILE
SMT 1	PL 4 – Senior Management	B. Paed. (UDW) B. Ed (Hon) - UKZN	25	Principal for 12 years
SMT 2	PL 3 - Senior Management	SPED – Springfield Diploma in Special Ed. - UNISA	37	HoD for 10 years Deputy Principal for 10 years Acted as principal for 4 years.
SMT 3	PL 2 - Management	SPED (Springfield) BA - UNISA	26	HoD for 10 years Union Site Steward

		FED-Management (UNISA) B. Ed (Hon) –(NWU)		Secretary of AMESA – Pietermaritzburg. Branch

Table 1: Biographical Details of Primary Participants (SMT Members)

PARTICIPANT	POST LEVEL (PL)	QUALIFICATION	YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE	LEADERSHIP PROFILE
TL1	PL 1 – Foundation Phase Educator	JPED – (Springfield) FDE – (Springfield) B. Ed (Hon) – (UNISA)	28	Staff representative on the SMT and SGB.
TL2	PL 1 – Senior Primary Educator	B. Paed. (UDW) B. Ed (Hon) - (UKZN)	28	Staff representative of SMT and SGB Chairperson of Staff Development Committee (SDT)
TL3	PL 1 – Senior Primary Educator	UDE (UDW) FDE (Springfield) B. Ed (Hon)-(UKZN)	24	Staff representative on SMT Union Site Steward
TL4	PL 1 – Foundation Phase Educator	JPED – (Springfield) FDE – Springfield B. Ed (Hon) – (UKZN)	29	Acted as HOD Grade Head SDT Secretary Fundraising co-ordinator Sports Code Convenor
TL5	PL 1 – Junior Primary Educator	JPED – (Springfield) FDE – Springfield B. Ed (Hon) - UNISA	26	Learning Area Chair Fundraising co-ordinator Sports Code Convenor
TL6	PL 1 – Senior Primary Educator	B.A (UKZN) HED (NCE)	24	Staff Rep. on SMT Learning Area Chair SDT member

	PL 1 – Senior Primary Educator	B.A (UDW) UHDE (UDW) B. Ed (Hon) – (UNISA)		Acted as HOD Grade Head SDT Secretary Fundraising co-ordinator Sports Code Convenor
TL7			24	
TL8	PL 1 – Senior Primary Educator	SPED (RAU) FDE (Stellenbosch) B. Ed. Hons. – (UKZN)	20	Learning Area Chair Fundraising co-ordinator Sports Code Convenor

Table 2: Biographical Details of Primary Participants (Level 1 Educators)

Four different data collection methods, individual interviews, focus group interviews, questionnaires and observations, were used. During the observation process, data were captured from various situations, such as SMT meetings, Staff Meetings, Phase meetings and other school committee meetings. To facilitate the data presentation process, each data collection method and the situation in which they were collected has been coded in Table 3.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD AND SITUATION	LABELLING CODE
Individual semi structured interview	I
Focus Group Interview	FGI
Questionnaire	Q
Observation	O
SMT Meeting	SMTM
Staff Meeting	SM
Phase Meeting	PM
Awards Committee Meeting	ACM
Fund Raising Committee	FRC

Table 3: Labelling codes for data collection method and situation

Themes that emerged in response to each of the research questions are used to organise my findings. I now begin with the presentation of the data and discussion of findings for research question one.

4.2   THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE FINDINGS

To establish how decision making was practiced across various structures in the case school, data from a range of data collection techniques were gathered. The broad themes that emerged from my analysis included the availability of structures and its enhancing or inhibiting properties for shared decision, the principal as an enabler or disabler of distributed leadership, the presence of the distributed leadership as characterised by Gunter (2005), the SMT's support for shared decision making, further strategies to enhance shared decision making and the challenges to decision making.

4.2.1 TEACHERS AS LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

Investigating whether teachers were, in the main, leaders or followers revealed how decision making was practiced across various school structures. The questionnaire provided a broad picture of the perceptions of the secondary participants, on being a leader or a follower or both a leader and follower.   Of the 19 participants, 13 (68 %) indicated that they were both leaders and followers. In other words, these educators did not adhere strictly to the leader-follower dualism, but were "in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles" (Gronn, 2000, p. 325) and they abandoned the "fixed leader follower dualism" (Gronn, 2000).   Of the 13 questionnaire participants who indicated that they were both leaders and followers, three educators indicated that they were only leaders in the classroom and they provided responses such as "*I feel I am a leader within the walls of my classroom*" (Q1), "*I am a leader in my class*" (Q2), and "*I am a leader because I take care of my own class*" (Q14). As followers they indicated that were "*willing to learn and get advice from senior and experienced educators*" (Q1), "*new, still learning and lots to learn*" (Q2) and "*accepted and followed decisions*" (Q14).   A primary participant, TL4 indicated that she was "*a natural leader*" (FGI, TL 4, 28/09/2011) which meant she assumed many leadership roles within the school and added, "*in my class, definitely a leader*" (FGI, 28/092011). Of the 19 participants, two educators who indicated that they were exclusively leaders motivated their responses by describing themselves as "*always prepared to take the lead....support and encourage others....empower colleagues...trustworthy, approachable and dependable*" (Q8). Similarly, the other educator indicated that she "*takes the initiative...head any event....lead with confidence and I enjoy it*" (Q12). Both these educators purported to possess characteristics of leadership which include being "purposeful, inclusive and value driven, build capacity

by developing the school as a learning community and being future orientated and strategically driven" (Gunter, 2004, p. 31).

Although two educators indicated that they were exclusively leaders, my observation of decision making structures, for SMT, staff and phase meeting contradicted their perception as being a leader all the time. Level one teachers assumed leadership roles but, in most instances, roles such as "*co-ordinator of table tennis*" (I, TL1, 15/12/2010) or being the "*SDT chair, Staff Rep, Learning Area Committee Chairperson*" (Q12) were situational, in other words, teachers assumed those leadership roles because they found themselves in a context that called for leadership. In other instances such as in the first staff meeting observed (20/08/2010), the principal led the meeting supported by other SMT members while the "*Phase Meeting was headed by the HoD*" (O, 18 August 2010) which indicated that these level one educators who purported to be leaders in every situation were, at times, followers. The data across the sets suggested that leaders and followers did not exist as separate entities as they were engaged in "dynamic roles that change over time and across context" (Sherer, 2008, p. 4). An indication that the leader-follower dualism was situational was aptly conveyed by Q1, a secondary participant who indicated that educators took on leadership role "*depending on the function or event*" (Q1).

Three educators indicated that they would be followers if it was in the "*best interest of the school*" (Q7) or was of "*benefit of the organisation*" (Q3 and Q5). Others indicated that they were leaders because they were "*able to command authority politely*" (Q19), "*take the initiative to lead*" (Q17) or they were convenors of a particular committee. My observations confirmed these perceptions as many teachers, including the principal, would follow because they believed that those that took a lead in decision making worked in the interests of the school.

A number of educators indicated that they were mere members of a committee giving the impression that they occupied a lower status in the committee as they did not occupy a leadership role. However, upon reflecting upon the words of the SMT1, "*sometimes when I go to a staff meeting I am just sitting there as an ordinary member of the staff*" (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010), it can be surmised that an ordinary member had an equal voice in the decision making process in the case school. That there existed a play of power, while not overt cannot be ignored. While SMT1 sat as an ordinary member of staff, the impact that he had on deliberations whether he made an input or not, cannot be ignored. On the other hand a level one educator cannot command the same level of authority and

thus cannot claim to have made the same impact as that of a principal. However, the manner in which decisions were reached revealed the strength of the voice of an ordinary member of staff. Thus, educators who perceived themselves to be ordinary member of the committee, while others acted as leaders lend weight to Spillane's (2004) constituting elements of teacher leadership whereby he asserts that in any given situation there has to be a leader or leaders and follower/s.

4.2.2 THE CONFIDENCE TO LEAD

Interestingly the data revealed that only just over half, 10 of the 19 (53%) of the participants were confident to lead and they took the initiative to lead and make decisions. Seven educators waited to be delegated a leadership role by the SMT and two educators did not take a leading role in any of the decision making structures within the case school. In problematizing this issue, the confidence to lead was in the main based on "I *have the experience and able to take on leading role*" (Q3). Those that waited to be delegated provided a response such as "*Need more experience, will grow and become more efficient*" (Q1) and those educators that did not lead were "*Not interested in taking on leadership role beyond the classroom*" (Q6)
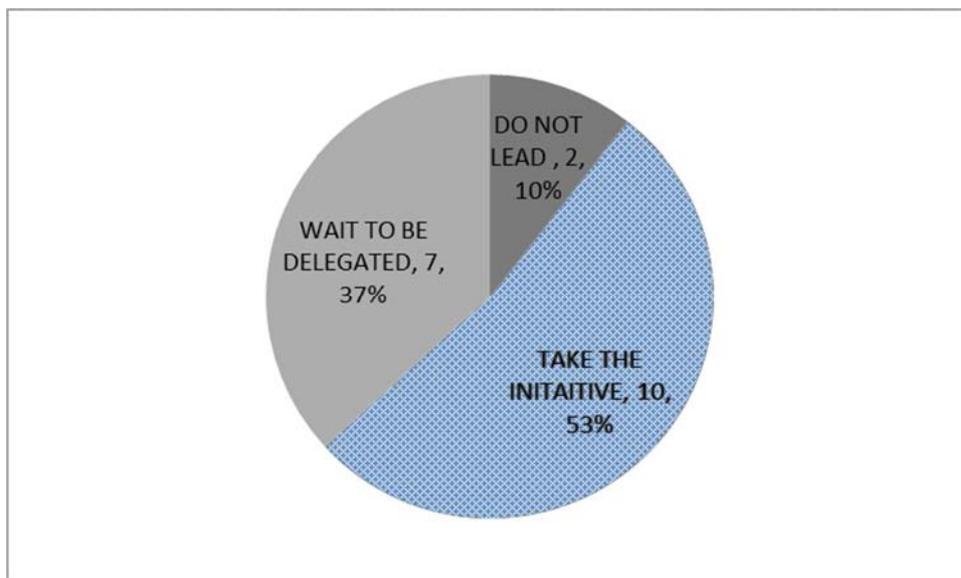
Figure 2: How leadership is enacted

The data in Figure 2 indicates that 53% of the educators at the case school were involved in leading and making decisions through their own initiative. While this was not an overwhelming majority, it is significant in that these teachers had the confidence to initiate their own leadership practices. In focusing on initiative taking, TL1 professed that, "*in my case I often take the initiative, usually run it by the principal –*

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such as the 150 year anniversary of the arrival of the Indians" (I, TL1, 15/12/2010).
She further added that recently another educator took the initiative to organise a Market
Day and saw it to fruition. TL1 also claimed the following: *"I do see myself as a leader
as I can initiate and I can lead and I have the power to make decisions and things"* (I,
TL1, 15/12/2010). Mention was also made of a HoD who *"often takes the initiative"* (I,
TL1, 15/12/2010). Educators who wanted to explore their leadership possibilities and
took the opportunities were allowed to unleash their ingenuity as leaders. What has
surfaced from the data is there were not only confident educators, but also confident
leaders within the case school.

Leadership initiatives in schools can only occur if distributed leadership and shared
decision making is encouraged and supported. Leadership was exhibited in various
ways as already shown, however a significant number of teachers possessed leadership
potential, but this potential only surfaced when they were called upon to take on a
challenge. There were teachers who "*shy away sometimes because they don't want to be
leaders and they don't want to take responsibility*" (I, TL3, 02/12/2010). Avoiding
leadership roles may have indicated a lack of confidence, but did not necessarily
indicate a lack of skill. SMT3 pointed out that there were many educators who were
competent to lead and make decisions *"but to come up front and say I want to do
certain thing because I am this kind of organiser, they don't"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).
These educators usually waited to be delegated a task by the SMT.

This perceived aloofness by the educators implied that there was a need at times to
delegate duties to educators or, as SMT3 propositioned, in order to get educators more
involved there was a need to *"subtly at the meetings, either move their name forward or
allow them to take responsibility then they will do it to the best of their abilities"* (1,
SMT3, 14/12/2010). SMT1 highlighted that educators sometimes needed to be coaxed
to stand up and be counted as a leader and share in the decision making process. He
mentioned that,

> *in a staff meeting I am not afraid to ask X what do you think of
> certain issues, because sometimes X can be very silent so I make
> it a point to include as many people as possible* (I, SMT1,
> 14/12/2010)

As chairperson of the Staff Development Team, TL2 through a needs analysis decided
to present a paper on 'multiple intelligences' to the staff. TL2 in her interview stated
that she had "*taken the initiative of presenting seminars at school, such as light on*

literacy, multiple intelligences and I would like to do more of those" (I, 9/12/2010). Further to this, *"senior educators take the initiative to mentor the new educators"* (TL2, 9/12/2010). In addition TL1 was identified as an initiator for *"developing a reading workshop for the entire staff"* (TL2, 9/12/2010). The type of leadership that the SMT, and more especially the principal advocated, determined the amount of space that educators had to initiate projects that unearthed their leadership skills and their involvement in decision making. The attitude of the principal who believed that *"it is left to the initiative of member of staff to see to it that the school continues to offer the quality of education that it does"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010) indicated that educators were provided with the space to develop their leadership skills and be part of the decision making process of the school.

4.2.3 SCHOOL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURES AS ENHANCERS OR INHIBITORS OF SHARED DECISION MAKING

The following were some of the decision making structures which existed within the case school: SMT meetings, staff meetings, phase meetings, learning areas committees, sporting code committees, fund raising committees, staff social committees, interview committee for the selection of new staff members, prefect committee, School Governing Body, the School Development Team, union site committees and special events committees, such as the Awards Day. I have elected to discuss, in some detail, only four of these decision-making structures: the staff meeting, two phase meetings and an awards committee meeting. The rationale for the selection of these structures involve different grouping of educators and each structure relates to a distinctive aspect of school functioning.

4.2.3.1 The staff meeting as a decision making structure

Staff meetings at schools are a forum where all educators meet to discuss issues regarding the operation of the school. They are "the forum for 'consultation' with level one educators on whole school issues" (Moonsamy, 2010, p.104). In the case school, the staff meeting was usually chaired by the principal. The principal's conduct at a staff meeting was one yardstick used to determine whether opportunities were created for educators to share in the decision making process and was consequently used to gauge whether distributed leadership was being practiced at the case school.

An observation of the staff meeting determined whether it was merely an information gathering session or an assembly of educators where decision making was shared. Indications from across the data sets pointed to shared decision making with strains of autocratic leadership with regards to departmental mandates. In addition, the data sets highlighted that the staff meetings did not at all times address the really pertinent issues as there were insufficient staff meetings.

The first staff meeting was observed on 20 August 2010 (SM 1, 20/08/2010). As chairperson, the principal initiated discussion as per the agenda, which was circulated a few days prior to the meeting. Members of the SMT were given slots during the meeting to make presentations. I noted during my observation of this staff meeting that this "*mode of presentation was first consulted and agreed to*" (O, SMTM, 19/08/2010) at the SMT meeting held before this meeting. While the principal chaired the meeting, the discussion was not dominated by him. Other members of the SMT as well as a level one educator took a leading role in initiating discussions. At this meeting

> *SMT3 is given an opportunity to make a presentation on assessment dates. HoD 2 makes an input on the progress in the Foundation Phase as well as assessment dates. The DP presents an overall view on the expectations for the Foundations of Learning. A level one educator (TL2) presents a short paper on multiple intelligences.* (O, SM, 20/08/2010)

Items on the agenda of the staff meeting created space for other members of the SMT to address the staff as reflected by SMT1below:

> *SMT3 and HoD 2 made an input on assessment dates to the staff. The input was merely for information purposes to make the entire staff aware of important dates on the academic calendar*" (O, SM, 20/08/ 2010).

SMT3 too indicated that "*the dates provided were discussed at the phase meeting and after due consideration we arrived at these dates*" (O, SM, 20/08/2010) which also pointed to a sharing of decision making. The principal could have merely informed the staff of the assessment dates as this was discussed at an SMT meeting held prior to the staff meeting. However, the principal chose to be inclusive and at the SMT meeting he indicated that the HoDs should "*make input on assessment dates for the relevant phases*" (O, SMT1, 18 Aug. 2010). To further cement the notion that the principal of the case school practised distributed leadership, SMT2 "*addressed the staff on the Foundations for Learning and required input from the staff in the form of a questionnaire from educators on underachieving learners*" (O, SM 1, 20/08/2010).

The attitude of the educators at the staff meeting was one of full participation and there was no evidence to suggest a lack of commitment to the adherence of the dates for assessments. Neither were there any signs that the educators did not have full confidence in the SMT members who had made presentations nor, for that matter, TL2 who had presented a paper on 'multiple intelligences'. There was applause and words of encouragement from the majority of educators for the manner in which the paper was presented as well as the relevance of the topic. Comments such as "you *did an excellent job", "your presentation was vibrant" and "such a useful presentation"* (O, SM, 20/08/2010) were made by educators. This milieu of encouragement for educators who demonstrated leadership initiative was further evident when the principal announced *"for the good of the order I am honoured to have amongst us a teacher of impeccable character who has been chosen by a leading publishing house to write a text book"* (O, SM1, 20/08/2010). Clearly the principal was fully supportive of the initiative taken by the two level one educators, TL2 and TL1.

Also, in the context of the staff meeting, the principal demonstrated that leadership was distributed in the case school when he invited the grade six educators to take responsibility for the selection of prefects. The principal noted that *"effective prefects play a huge part in the maintenance of discipline at school, and I leave it to the grade 6 educators to select appropriate learners"* (O, SM 1, 20/08/2011).

Staff members agreed that staff meetings were places of discussion and shared decision-making. For example, there was absolute unanimity amongst the 19 secondary participants that decisions were taken after discussion and consensus reached. TL1 believed that all educators were given an equal voice at staff meetings, however, *"few people make use of it and others choose to remain quiet"* (I, TL I, 15/12/2010). SMT1 attested to this when he stated: "*an agenda is circulated and people are aware what items are going to be discussed and people can apply their minds ... and have the freedom to come to the meeting and speak their mind*" (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

However, there were times in staff meetings when there was little consultation on certain issues because of the nature of the issue or because a decision on the matter was already taken. For example, one staff member indicated that the *"principal's decision is final on certain issues"* (Q8). TL1 alluded that the principal sometimes came to staff meetings and *"the decision has already been made"* (I, 15/12/2010). However, TL1 added that such decisions were made with *"the good of the institution"* in mind. One such issue was the principal's vehement stance that a dance items at the award function

was not in keeping with the ethos of the event. It was inferred that the principal, who has been viewed as a leader that followed a participatory style of leadership in the main, reverted to an authoritarian leadership style when circumstances dictated it. The authoritarian leadership style that was at times practiced was not taken in a negative light by educators as educators deemed this approach necessary under particular circumstances. This perception is also conveyed in the following citation *"I know management needs to take decisions sometimes on their own"* (FGI, TL6, 28/09/ 2011).

TL1 pointed out that at times items on the agenda were merely for information purposes and came *"straight from the department or policy"* (I, TL I, 15/12/2010). TL1 averred that in this case there was no discussion about whether to follow or not to follow the decision, but rather on how to implement the departmental directive. In this regard, TL2 acknowledged that space created for the educators to air their views was not contrived and that the meetings were not managed in a dictatorial manner. She affirmed the assertion of the majority of the staff participants and that of TL1 by claiming that *"all the educators are free to give their suggestions, make decisions and alter decisions"* (I, TL2, 9 Dec. 2010). TL3 confirmed the claims of TL 1 and TL2 in having declared that *"at staff meetings teachers question certain things.....when they question, it is sometimes for clarity or they may not be happy with the decision taken and the staff would discuss it and come to an agreement"* (I, TL3. 02/12/2010).

However, despite the many positive perspectives on the staff meetings as illustrated above, there were some indications that decisions were at times perceived as rushed: *"we are rushing it, one hour is not enough. We are not given enough opportunity to have a discussion"* (FGI, TL6, 28/09/2011). This statement is contrary to the assertions made by SMT1 that educators have the *"freedom to come to the meeting and speak their mind"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010) or *"the entire staff voices their opinion, whoever wants to voice their opinion. They do say what they want"* (FGI, TL8, 28/09/2011). It also emerged during the focus group interview that while there was shared decision making, the process was not always ideal as the process could be improved. SMT2 also revealed that issues were at times not adequately addressed because *"sometimes when we have staff meetings because we are talking about fund raising or that teacher coming or that teacher going. Everything else, but the important issues"* (I, SMT2, 29/09/2011). Moreover, some participants felt more formal staff meetings were required as information cascaded *"in the staffroom with half the staff...informally during the tea break"* (FGI, TL4, 28/09/2011) was limiting as only those members present in the staffroom were privy to important matter discussed. As referred to earlier, there are

limitations to distributed leadership and this may result in a feeling of alienation (Wood, 2004) as was perceived by some participants.

SMT3 provided a management's perspective on how decisions were taken at a staff meeting. TL1's view was re-iterated in SMT3's claim that:

> *…certain aspects are not negotiable, so you find that their views and opinions are not going to count, because it has to be done....they are either modified where the time frames or date may be changed but it is accepted that these decisions are best for OHPS* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010)

Similarly, the principal too believed that certain decisions were policy driven, such as the curriculum, but *"people are involved in discussions of the curriculum in terms of delivery"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). On the question of staff participation at staff meetings, SMT3 was of the firm belief that

> *Where educators have their own ideas and opinions at staff meetings, they do express their views and it is considered. There is no such thing at our school, where what is said at SMT level carries for all, they are allowed their views and opinions and share their disapproval or certain items or approval* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010)

Having examined the data garnered from across the data sets it was abundantly clear that staff meetings were, in the main, discussion forums and decisions were arrived at in a collaborative manner. At times decisions were *"non-negotiable"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010). These occurred when *"sometimes there are certain things that he has to comply with the Department and he has to make a decision... then he informs us"* (I, TL3, 02/12/2010). Here there was agreement that such decisions were either policy driven or were accepted to be for the good of the school and in these instances the stance by a participant was *"I respect the management's decision because sometimes they do things for the well- being of the school"* (FGI, TL5, 28/09/2011).

Evidence from across the data sets also suggested that staff meetings at the case school were not mere talk shops dominated by the principal. Even when the principal had to carry out departmental mandates, there was discussion on context and implementation. There were perceptions that inadequate time was allocated to staff meetings and not enough staff meetings were held, however some teachers believed that teachers were given an equal voice. Those that remained silent did so; exercising their prerogative not to participate and they were not retrained by lack of opportunity or an aura of intimidation. Decision making at staff meetings was not hijacked by the principal and

there was widespread agreement that democracy prevailed and decisions making was through consensus. Thus I can confidently surmise that staff meetings in the case school were not a case of "I participate, we participate, but they decide over what kind of issue we can decide" (Hatcher, 2005, p. 259).

Having looked at decision-making during a staff meeting in the case study school, I now move on to discuss decision-making during phase meetings. There were two phases within the school; the Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3) and the Senior Primary Phase (Grades 4 to 7). I begin with a discussion on the senior primary phase meeting and then move on to discuss decision-making at the Foundation Phase level.

4.2.3.2 The Senior Primary Phase meetings as a decision making structure

Senior Primary Phase meetings were observed on 8 September 2010 and the 12 October 2011 respectively. Both these meetings were chaired by SMT3. Present at the meeting were all senior primary educators as well as the Deputy Principal.

The first meeting (PM, 8 Sep. 2010) was to map a way forward after a prolonged three week public servants' strike. Much time had been lost during the third term, which made it impossible to complete the scheduled teaching programme and assessment tasks. SMT3 initiated the discussion by

> *suggesting that all marks for terms three and four be added and converted to 100% and the HoD expected the proposal to be carried. There was a lack of participation from the younger teachers that were not familiar with the area of weighting of marks. However, there was a counter proposal from a senior educator. The HoD was a little taken aback, as if he did not expect a counter proposal. A discussion ensued and the support for the counter proposal was voiced by three other educators* (O. PM. 8/09/2010).

In examining this phase meeting, there was an indication that the SMT3 expected his proposal to carry. Upon receiving a counter proposal, discussion was allowed to proceed and, in the final analysis, the decision reached at this meeting was through discussion and consensus. That *"the HoD was a little taken aback"* (O, PM. 8/09/2010) suggests he did not expect any discussion on the issue or a counter-proposal. SMT3's outlook on shared decision making was that it was *"practised to a certain extent"* but he was *"being not very comfortable [with it]….and too much of it, I don't believe is good"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).

While there were indications that SMT3 in the Senior Phase was exceedingly supportive, TL 2 disclosed that the tone of the meetings was at times strained as there was a degree of dissatisfaction amongst the educators:

> *There are a few educators that totally disagree with the decisions that we take right up to the point that it is sanctioned by the HoD...There is like some dissatisfaction when we leave the meeting room at times* (I, TL2, 9/12/2010).

TL1 added to the nature of dissatisfaction, touched on by TL2, by stating, "*I have a feeling that Senior Primary teachers are a bit unhappy....they seem to be overwhelmed by some of the decisions taken over there*" (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). TL1 openly revealed that the Senior Primary educators were unhappy with the "*authoritarian approach*" of SMT3 and finally she advanced: "*But, I think, it is the approach and not so much the work. Maybe, the way he comes down strongly on them and they feel intimidated or (sigh) I don't know*" (I, TL1, 15/12/2010).

In considering whether teachers' inputs were taken into account TL1 asserted:

> *No, I think that is the problem, I think some people who do want to talk; they feel it is not taken and they don't want to talk anymore … (pause). Because I think the decision has already been made* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010).

That teachers' inputs were not always considered was also suggested by SMT2 who was of the view that "*it is one way only, don't go this way or that way, this is how it has to be done*" (I, SMT2, 29/09/2011). Further to this, there was genuine agreement that the teachers received "*a lot of support*" (FGI, TL6, 28/09/2011) and "*they are guiding us all the time*" (FGI, TL8, 28/09/2011). Despite the support received by educators from SMT3, educators in the Senior Primary Phase were unhappy as "*sometimes decisions are taken that's final and we just go by that*" (FGI, TL8, 28/09/2011) and at "*certain times because it's like this load upon us that we can't climb this hill, you know the way it's puts across to us*" (FGI, TL8, 28/09/2011).

Despite the challenges alluded to by TL2, and further expounded upon by the other level one primary participants, they nevertheless believed that, in the main, educators were largely comfortable with sharing their views. In her final analysis, a view supported by the majority of teachers in the questionnaire, TL3 disclosed: "*Ja, everybody is very open to suggestions and make suggestions themselves....there is a good rapport*" (I, TL3, 9/12/2010). SMT2, however, believed that the tone of the meeting did not encourage open communication for it was "*picked up at our senior*

primary meeting that teachers don't exercise that right" (I, SMT2, 29/09/2011). This left the HoD with the impression that silence meant acceptance and thus *"the quieter you are, this person is not going to change because this person feels it is OK"* (I, SMT2, 29/09/2011).

During the second Phase Meeting (O, PM, 12/10/2010) the atmosphere was very cordial and there was a good rapport amongst the educators:

> *The HoD being the chair initiated discussion as per the agenda and most of the discussion was dominated by the chair. In terms of the dates for the exams, a draft proposal was presented to the staff for comment. Thus, room was made for teachers' inputs and a final time frame would be presented after the suggestions were taken into account* (O, PM, 12/10/2010).

An educator raised her concern about the feasibility of organising a Market Day[2] for the term. The educator's proposal to cancel Market Day was supported by two other educators. However, *"the chair did not dismiss the suggestion, but rather encouraged the educators to raise this issue at the correct forum, this being the Staff Meeting"* (O, PM, 12/10/2010). This attitude of the chair was not indifferent, but rather encouraging. This observation is in tandem with the views revealed by the majority of secondary participants (89%) who felt that decisions at a phase meeting were taken after discussion and consensus was reached. However after a deeper analysis of decision making at the senior phase meetings, a different picture emerged.

While TL2 acknowledged that in the senior primary phase meeting, *"decisions are arrived at holistically, it is a team effort, we brainstorm it together"* (I, TL2, 9/12/ 2010), she very diplomatically added that *"ultimately it is the HoD or the supervisor – he considers all the ideas and suggestions that we have made and then marry it together with the requirements of policy"*. SMT3 being the HoD mentioned, concurred and held the view that *"policy dictates how decisions are made"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010). This authoritarian approach adopted by SMT3 is aptly captured by Wright in pronouncing that those in formal authority "know that their schools have to succeed in a target-based culture and in the end this will drive what is allowed and what is prescribed" (Wright, 2003, p. 142).

While there were genuine attempts at the phase meeting to distribute leadership and share in decision making, the limitation of distributed leadership as articulated by Wood

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[2] A fund raising initiative held at school, whereby different stalls are set up for learners to purchase items or participate in an activity.

(2004) was once again brought to the fore when educators expressed their concern about sometimes being alienated from the decision making process. Unlike the staff meeting, educators at the senior phase meeting did not believe that there was adequate discussion and consensus. The *"not negotiable"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010) approach of SMT3 was highlighted as the primary reason for educators unhappiness in the senior primary phase. However, during the latter part of the year there were genuine attempts by SMT3 to make some amends as SMT3 had *"eased up a bit because I think teachers have been talking about it"* (FGI, TL6, 28/09/2011).

4.2.3.3 The Foundation Phase Meeting as a decision making structure

The Foundation Phase meeting was a gathering of foundation phase educators who met to discuss issues applicable to that phase. This phase was headed by a HoD with 11 class units under her wing. Primarily curriculum issues came up for discussion. The Foundation Phase HoD was not a participant in my study as she did not avail herself to be interviewed. Thus, data gathered on the Foundation Phase was through interviews of the primary participants and observations of the interactions amongst members of the phase. In the Foundation Phase meeting *"democracy does rule"* (FGI, TL 5, 28/09/2011) and healthy discussions ensued *"because a democratic atmosphere is present at these meetings"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). This, according to TL1, was due to the dynamics of the phase and the power relationships that existed within this department. Educators in the Foundation Phase *"did not allow her* (FP HoD) *just to make a decision"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010) without first consulting with them. TL1 believed that the FP HoD was *"apprehensive of just using the authoritative approach …because of past experiences"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). There were indications that, previously, the HoD was *"challenged a great deal" "* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010) and to avoid confrontation she did not *"do anything without consulting everybody"* and this was perceived as FP HoD was *"forced to be democratic"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). Although the FP HoD was democratic in her approach, her status as a leader was perceived as questionable by some participants. Another educator within this department perceived that *"my HoD is not a leader. Personally she wouldn't or doesn't take responsibility. She wouldn't make a decision and stand by it"* (FGI, TL4, 28/09/2011). These sentiments were echoed by SMT2 who pronounced that *"the leadership style there is very inconsistent, not strong, can fall either way and has shown a weakness towards some and allows herself to be bullied"* (I, 29/09/2011)

Despite the above comments there were indications that the HoD is slowly transforming into a more democratic leader as TL 1 pronounced, *"she is coming on board; there is a difference in the way she does things"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). That there was a noticeable difference was advanced by another educator within the phase by declaring that, *"I don't have any issues with my HoD, I feel she is fine"* (FGI, TL5, 28/09/2011).

4.2.3.4 The Awards Function: a shared decision making process

At the case study school, an awards function is held annually to highlight learners' achievements. At the time of my research in 2010, the function was co-ordinated by a committee with SMT3 at the helm. Several meetings were held in the run up to the event. The Awards Committee was divided into sub-committees and each sub-committee reported to a full sitting of the Awards Committee. The chair of the Awards Committee also reported to a staff meeting. At this forum proposals were made for ratification by the staff. An Awards Committee meeting was observed on 18 November 2010 (O, ACM, 18/11/2010). While the head of the committee was selected from the ranks of the formal school management, this did not preclude level one educators from assuming leadership roles in sub-committees and thus being involved in decision making. My observation highlighted the different roles the staff played in arranging the event. For example, I observed that *"the chairperson provided feedback to the staff on progress and arrangements for the Awards Function. Most of the discussion was initiated and dominated by the chairperson"* (O, ACM, 18/11/2010). TL2, in describing how the decision making unfolded in the Awards Committee, alluded to the influence the principal had on the decision making process. According to TL2:

> *If the principal does not like a certain idea, then he would state so, he is quite firm. He would state, 'No, I don't think that would portray a good image of the school'* (I, TL2, 9/12/2010).

In observing the report back of the Awards Committee to the staff, it can be confirmed that the principal voiced his opposition to dance items being performed at the Awards Function:

> *The principal did not summarily dismiss the idea of a dance item, but provided a motivation for opposing this item. He was able to demonstrate to the staff that a dance is not in keeping with the formal atmosphere of the function. The entire staff supported the proposal to replace the dance performance with a musical rendition* (O, ACM, 18/11/2010).

In terms of the staff's attitude to participation in the planning and sharing in the decisions for the Awards Function, there was generally an aura of commitment in

wanting to stage a successful function and, in particular, the chair was assured of the full participation of those staff members that were allocated tasks. This allegiance to the task was evident in proposals such as: *"leave the refreshments to me, I will organise everything" (*O, ACM, 18/11/2010).

However in deciding who would be programme director, it was more a case of *"tradition ensued and the chair declared himself as the Programme Director"* (O, ACM, 18/11/2010). *"There was no resistance from the staff to this announcement"* (O, ACM, 18/11/2010), indicating that they accepted the custom as it stood. There was an overt willingness by educators to share and take on responsibilities. *"Through discussion, each member of the committee resolved to oversee a particular task*" (O, ACM, 18/11/2010). The list of awards to be presented was made available to the staff and their input was sought with regards to additions and deletions of awards. Once again, this exhibited that democracy was at work. In addition the *"choice of the guest speaker was opened for proposals from the staff"* (O, ACM, 18/11/2010).

Dispersed leadership was evident, in the formation of sub-committees. These committees indicated the emergence of multiple leaders as each sub-committee was entrusted with decision making powers. A level one *"educator was in-charge of each sub-committee and had to make decisions regarding that committee"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). Sub-committees were created as an opportunity to *"empower people to allow them to lead themselves"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010). These sentiments were re-echoed when the tasks of presenting part of the programme on stage was opened to the educators. In wanting to distribute leadership roles, the chair encouraged the staff by stating that it was *"time to start taking part and be a boss and lead"* (O, ACM, 18/11/2010). The above scenario signals that educators at times needed to be encouraged to be part of the decision making process and take a leading role as not all educators took the initiative when avenues for leading and making decisions were available. In the main a distributed form of leadership was practiced at the awards function meeting.

4.2.3.5 A Vignette: The Fundraising Committee at work

A meeting and the workings of fund raising structure was observed during the fourth quarter of 2010. Seven members made up this committee and the committee was headed by two educators who agreed to co-chair the committee. In co-chairing the committee, TL3 indicated that TL1 *"did the bulk of the organisation for the Summer Show and Dance although I was one of the co-ordinators"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010). Tasks

of the other members were not restricted to simply following the instructions of the leaders. Each member assumed a leadership role.

> *Through a discussion it was agreed that the following areas needed to be attended to: selection of items to be presented by learners, printing and distribution of tickets, advertising, tuck shop, arranging prizes for the lucky draw and the decoration of the venue and making arrangements for sound and music. Each of these tasks became sub-committees with the freedom to include other members of staff to assist.* (O, FRC, 08/10/2010)

Other members of staff had a choice of which sub-committee of the fundraiser they wished to join as there were *"sub committees and tasks are distributed"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010). Having observed the fund raising committee at work I can confirm that sub-committee leaders were empowered to take decisions and they revealed leadership acumen through the manner in which they managed their tasks. What follows is a recording of observation of the fund raising committee at work:

> *The educator that took on the task of printing and distribution made decisions on the design of the tickets, arranged for quotes for the printing of the tickets and decided on how to distribute and reconcile the number of tickets issued. The educator responsible for the selection of items by learners worked out criteria for selection, got the teachers on board to motivate learners to participate, made arrangements with parents with regard to consent and costumes and was resourceful in creating time for learners to practice during the school day. The educator in charge of operating the tuck shop made arrangements for the sponsorship of items, drew up a budget for items to be purchased, purchased and priced the items, and drew up a duty roster for staff to assist in the tuck shop. The educator in charge of decorating the venue and arrange for music had to source a reliable service provider and work with the service provider to ensure that the setup was in accordance to the agreed specifications* (O, Fundraising Committee at Work, Term 4 2010)

In examining the work of an ordinary member of a committee, it must be acknowledged that those educators who pointed out that they were mere members of a committee, did not do justice to the portfolio they occupied and the tasks that they performed. Members of committees such as fundraising, awards, concerts and debs ball to highlight a few, become leaders of sub-committees and were responsible for ensuring that the sub-committee complements the work of the other sub-committees, which ultimately leads to a successful event. While the co-ordinator was overall in charge of the event, it was the leadership of the members and the decisions that they made within the sub-committees that drove the planning and preparation of the event. TL1 described her

role as the leader of the event: *"I had meetings and everybody could see how the others were functioning and even for that matter, myself functioning as a leader, because I think it was a leadership role in doing the Summer Show and Dance"* (I, TL1,15/12/2010). In respect of the committee meetings *"Feedback given to the coordinator of the event at a full sitting of the committee and the decisions of each sub-committee were discussed and suggestions, where necessary were provided"* (O, ACM, 18/11/2010).

4.3 THE PRINCIPAL AS ENHABLER OR DIABLER OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Evidence across the data sets has pointed to a distribution of leadership in the various decision making structures. The purpose of this section is to fathom the degree to which there was a distribution of leadership in decision making. For decision making to be distributed, the context must be enabling and thus it is necessary to look into the leadership approach of the principal to determine to what extent distributed decision making was, or was not, enabled. As we know from literature, the principal is "central to the practice of leadership" (Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley & Somaroo, 2010, p. 404) and he is generally viewed as "the linchpin for success in any school change initiative" (White-Smith & White, 2009, p. 260). It is therefore to the leadership style of the principal that I now turn.

There were 15 secondary participants (79%) in the school who effectively described the principal as having displayed a participatory style of leadership. Comments such as *"works together with the staff"* (Q2) , *"includes staff in decision making"* (Q3), *"gives everyone a chance to lead"* (Q4), *"decisions taken are consultative"* (Q7), *"allows to be part of decision making"* (Q12), *"ample opportunity to participate"* (Q13), *"recognizes teachers as important stakeholders"* (Q16) and *"allows for growth of individuals"* (Q19) all attest to the notion that the principal followed a participatory style of leadership. Only two participants described the principal's leadership style as dominantly authoritarian whereby the principal was described as someone who *"fails to consult before decisions"* (Q8) and that his *"decision is final"* (Q11). The view of these two educators, while not the view held by the majority of educators on the dominant leadership approach of the principal is nevertheless valid as there were indications that the principal sometimes defaulted to the autocratic approach. The principal

acknowledged that a situation may call for him *"to be autocratic"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). My observations of the staff meetings revealed that these gatherings were usually, but not always, chaired by the principal. In instances where the meeting was not chaired by the principal, he was present at these meetings. He explained: *"I go to a staff meeting I am just sitting there as an ordinary member of the staff and where I allow others to run with certain kind of activities or projects ..."* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). It is hence, safe to reason from the responses of the educators that there was overwhelming agreement amongst level one educators that the principal adhered to a participatory style of leadership.

However, whilst adopting a participatory style of leadership, the principal was alert to his responsibility as chief accounting officer in his school:

> *The bottom line is, as a principal, you are the chief accounting officer, so as much as you can delegate and you give up a bit of your authority, the bottom line is that it still comes back to you. You can delegate responsibility, but as head of the institution, you are finally, ultimately accountable for whatever happens in that decision* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

The tension of relinquishing authority whilst still being accountable (MacBeath, 2005),was evident in this principal's response and suggests "a balancing act" (Van der Mescht and Tyala, 2008, p. 227) where the principal is challenged to determine, in line with legislation, what practices can be distributed and how the distribution will occur. The discussion on the ability to fine tune the balance between relinquishing authority and maintaining accountability in promoting distributed leadership will be further examined under the section on factors that enhance shared decision making in the case school. I now pursue a discussion on the principal as an enabling factor of distributed leadership.

The principal identified himself as *"the gatekeeper of distributed leadership"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). This stance of being a gatekeeper of distributed leadership adopted by the principal is further reinforced by the statement *"I see myself as a transformational leader"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). As a transformational leader the principal's aim was:

> *"To empower others, I want to give people the opportunity to lead and I think with leadership the more you get the opportunity, the better you become"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

Two primary participants in this study also alluded to the principal of the case school as the *"gatekeeper of distributed leadership"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). TL3 viewed the principal's approach to leadership as *"dispersed, democratic"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010) and

TL2 Indicated that *"leadership is definitely distributed within the school...usually in the form of committees, where everything is done via a committee and a level one educator leads the committee"* (I, SGB Rep, 9 /12/2010).

While in the main the principal practised the tenets of a transformational leader, he further acknowledged that while he *"believes in democracy"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010)*, "there are times in leadership when you cannot be democratic"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010) because of departmental prescripts *"where you have to be autocratic"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). This autocratic approach that the principal sometimes needed to adopt was confirmed by TL1 who verified that

> *Certain decisions, especially where it involves the implementation of policy and there has to be consistency in its practice, there is seldom debate over such decisions* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010).

Evidence across the data sets has signalled a compelling leaning towards the principal being a participatory leader and an enabler of distributed leadership. As an enabler of distributed leadership the principal has done well to create an environment where "teachers are nurtured and developed so that they will be able to meet the challenges of an ever changing educational system and keep abreast with the changes" (Pillay, 2008, p. 122). Having established that there was distributed leadership and shared decision making in the school, I now turn to classifying distribution of shared leadership as authorised, dispersed and democratic.

4.4 CLASSIFYING DISTRIBUTION OF DECISION MAKING: A FURTHER RESPONSE TO THE DATA

Based on evidence presented in the previous section, it can be concluded that there was distribution of leadership and decision making in the case school. What now needs to be examined a little more closely is how decision making was distributed. To do this, I will use Gunter's three characteristics of distributed leadership, authorised, dispersed and democratic as conceptual tools to assist me to describe and explain the nature of the relationships and the location of power in the different interactions between school leaders, followers and aspects of their situation in the practice of leadership.

In studying the practice of distributed leadership as advocated by Gunter (2005), Grant (2010) has ranked the distribution of leadership "from level one (authorised) through to

level three (democratic) mirrors the increased distribution of power from restricted (authorised) to expansive (democratic)" (2010, p. 65).

4.4.1 LEVEL ONE: DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN DECISION MAKING AS AUTHORISED

Distributed leadership in decision making as authorised follows a top-down approach, however teachers who are empowered are "licensed to deliver in ways that recognise some discretion as long as the overall goals are achieved or exceeded" (Gunter, 2005, p. 52).   What follows is an examination of the prevalence of authorised distributed leadership in the case school and a discussion on whether it was more a case of delegation or empowerment.

According to TL1, tasks were usually delegated by the principal or other members of the SMT and described the process as "*from the principal, the HoDs are given authority and this is filtered down to the phase level, where eventually teachers take on different roles such as mentoring, learning area heads, etc.*(I, TL1, 15/12/2010)

TL2 also provided examples of delegated tasks as authorised and these occurred in such instances as

> *administrative work such as keeping registers, following the OBE, implementing IQMS, procedures for following grievances and disputes. This allows some decisions by the teacher, but ultimately it is authorised by bodies like SACE, ELRC, by the NCS policy, etc*. (I, 9/12/2010)

TL2 reflected more on administrative tasks, adherence to policy mandates and subscribing to the code of conduct of the professional bodies, to which she was affiliated, rather than leadership and decision making roles.   These were what SMT3 referred to as *"non-negotiable"* (SMT3, 14/12/2010) for it *"comes down as an instruction and has to be followed"* (SMT3, 14/12/2010). Distributing leadership in this manner was understood by TL2 and SMT3 as "a way of co-opting teachers to fulfilling administrative purposes and the implementation of external mandates" (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 83). I believe that while the delegation of usually administrative tasks may be perceived as mundane and more a management than a leadership responsibility, it should be viewed as a move to being given leadership roles.

Authorised distributed leadership that facilitated empowerment, according toTL3, was when *"certain teachers for the Market Day were given the role to co-ordinate"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010) This was a form of empowerment because educators were given the space to

fulfil the tasks without strict prescripts, so long as the task was satisfactorily completed. Through observation, I am able to confirm that the role of the co-ordinator was usually rotated, thus giving as many educators as possible an opportunity to take on leadership roles.

SMT3 also referred to an understanding of distributed leadership and decision making as authorised:

> *There is distributed leadership where it is based on educators' strengths, where they are given a task and they are allowed to decide on how that activity unfolds, for example when learners are given a hot meal, an educator who is strong at this, and they decide on the entire function and they inform staff by having staff involved in different sub committees* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).

In instances where the SMT matched educators' strengths with the task at hand, then the SMT in a sense delegated the educator to take on the leadership role and that educator had the full backing of the SMT. SMT1 endorsed the thoughts of SMT3 when he stressed: *"we say X should be doing this because they have a particular passion for it, they have the necessary attributes and skills"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010)

There was agreement amongst the SMT that when a person was authorised or selected by the SMT to fulfil a task, *"there is an agenda to put the person there as the person has the necessary skills"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). This idea was also brought to the fore by TL1 who indicated that, after she volunteered to head a fund raising event, she realised that another educator *"may have been spoken to about heading this committee"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). This indicated that distributed leadership when authorised was at times based on the need of the SMT to either empower or select a candidate that they perceived would satisfactorily complete the project. This view of TL1 suggested that, in this instance, "the SMT determined which teachers had the expertise to lead and in which activities" (Grant, 2010, p. 304). However, SMT1 added that while a person may have been head hunted by the SMT to lead a committee, structure or function, the staff views were also considered and a measure of democracy was catered for as the person selected *"must enjoy the support of the majority of members of staff, and if there are serious objections, then that can be reviewed"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). In the situation described by TL1, a compromise was reached, whereby due to the complexity of the event and the time frames, both educators co-convened the event.

That there was authorised delegation of leadership as above is validated in the manner the process of delegation is described by Grant (2010). Delegation "is usually initiated by the principal or the SMT and it is where work is distributed from the principal to others" (p. 302).

SMT1 endorsed the views and some of the examples cited by the level 1 educators. He elaborated on formal and informal distribution of leadership. An indication that leadership was distributed at different levels resonates in this statement:

> *Formally there is a distribution of leadership where there is the principal, deputy, master teachers, senior teachers, etc. But informally, a level one teacher could be the chairperson of a fund raising committee. We have social committees, where any teacher, could be even the Head of Department or Deputy Principal who is heading that particular term etc… Even within the phases, as much as you have the HoDs controlling, but within that, people are given responsibilities* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

Leadership and decision making did not only lie within the domain of those in formal leadership and was elaborately articulated by SMT1 above. This view is in keeping with that of Forsyth (1990) who claims that decision making is a shared process that follows a structure that may be formally or informally constructed. SMT3 on the other hand was a little circumspect in his interview on the issue of distributing leadership. While having acknowledged that educators were involved in distributed leadership at different levels, he added that it was *"distributed with an agenda"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010). SMT1 indicated that he would like to *"open the gates so to speak for as many people as possible to make decisions"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). SMT3 however believed that the principal together with the SMT as gatekeepers of distributed leadership *"distribute leadership where it is based on educators' strengths"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010). SMT3 qualified the statement that leadership and decision making was distributed with a purpose and added *"we allow for distribution of decision making in a sense where it is micro-managed. As sub-committees they are given empowerment with terms of references"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).

On the question of how effective level 1 educators were on the SMT and SGB, SMT3 responded as follows:

> *I think their participation is very effective. In order for a school to function at a high level, transparency is absolutely important and if all stakeholders are present, then information becomes more authentic"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).

What is clear from the scrutiny of the questionnaires as well as the interview transcripts of the level 1 educators and SMT members is that educators' involvement in leadership and decision making structures was not restricted to only the classroom, but beyond the classroom and in a particular instance outside the school zone.

This is not only an example of democracy at work, but is also indicative of the sharing or dispersing of leadership to which I now turn.

4.4.2 Level 2: Distributed Leadership in Decision Making as Dispersed

A feature of dispersed distributed leadership is its emergent property where initiative is widely circulated (Gunter, 2005; Woods, 2004). It is on this emergent characteristic of distributed leadership in the case school that I now focus on. The participatory leadership approach of the principal as well as decision making structures available in the case school created opportunities for level one educators to emerge as leaders.

TL1 considered herself to be a school leader. This emergent feature of her taking on leadership and decision making functions was demonstrated through her *"own behaviour, starting from conducting the assembly and volunteering to be co-ordinator for the functions"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). TL1 demonstrated that much of what she did was not only due to being delegated a task or fulfilling a role function due to tasks being dispersed, but she resolutely believed that much of what she did was self-initiated. This view as an emergent leader is highlighted in her statements, *"I volunteered to head this committee"* and *"like organising the Indian Function, it was something that just emerged"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). Besides having labelled herself as an initiator of ideas, she also identified other members of staff who she believed were resourceful. The Table Tennis Committee was formed with people who *"volunteered to get onto the committee"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). Moreover, in describing the activities for the Market Day, TL1, once again supported the notion that decision making and leadership was emergent in that another educator *"came up with the idea of a mini world cup for the Market Day ... and saw it to fruition"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). The above description of TL1 as an emergent leader is captured by Grant (2010) in the following excerpt.

> It (teacher leadership) can help encourage teachers to change to do things without guidance or influence of principals or heads of department, to move beyond the classroom and start motivating, guiding and creating relationships and connections among teachers so as to improve educational practices (Grant, 2006, p.520).

The link between how leadership and decision making tasks were dispersed, was brought to light by TL3 who stated that *"certain teachers for the Market Day were given the role to co-ordinate or they volunteered to do it"* (I, TL3, 02/12/2010). While teachers were given the room to make decisions, they needed to keep in mind that decisions that were usually not classroom based impact on the rest of the school, and in this instance teachers were *"given empowerment with terms and references"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010) or as TL3 explained *"teachers do make decisions and take it to the SMT and they usually support our initiative"* (I, TL3, 02/12/2010).

The SMT engaged differently from each other on the issue of whether leadership and decision making was emergent within the case school. SMT1 assumed the stance that there were instances where educators took the lead in decision making yet, on the other hand, SMT3 felt that there was very little of leadership and decision making amongst level 1 educators being emergent and pronounced:

> *I am yet to see someone totally stepping up and say: 'I am an*
> *emerging leader, I have aspirations of being in management and*
> *I want to do certain things* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010)

Besides SMT3's perception of educators not having declared their intention of wanting to be on management, he was of the opinion that the level 1 educators did not self-initiate projects and they did not *"come up front and say I want to do certain thing because I am this kind of organiser, they don't"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010). Educators' involvement in leadership and shared decision making within the various structures of the school has been made abundantly clear thus far, however the data did not reveal show a significant number of educators who could claim to be truly emergent leaders.

While there was evidence of dispersed distributed leadership as being emergent, this was not the only way that leadership was dispersed in the case study school. SMT1 acknowledged that the school *"had a reputation of everyone being involved in decision making"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). There was evidence that this culture of dispersing leadership was continued *"where other people are involved in leadership"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010) usually through the formation of sub-committees. TL1 who co-convened a fund raising event, made reference to leadership being dispersed:

> *An educator was in-charge of each sub-committee and had to*
> *make decisions regarding that committee. For example, the*
> *Deco Committee was given the mandate to come up with the*
> *appropriate theme"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010)

The primary participants furthermore mentioned that the distribution of leadership and decision making was also dispersed in sports as different educators took charge of a code of sport. In addition the working of Learning Area Committees, excursion committees per grade, the selection of prefects and the structures to co-ordinate the various school events all signalled that leadership and decision making was thriving in the case school. TL3 enumerated an array of sub-committees that educators were involved in:

> *we have various subject committees … one must be the chairperson, one must be the secretary. And they give all teachers a chance to be a chairperson, and then when it comes to the sport and extra and co-curricular activities it is open, it is free to the staff to decide what code they want to take and take on the leadership of convening that sport* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010).

Evidence gathered indicated that to a large extent there was a sharing of leadership roles which resulted in the "the power relations in the school [being] shifted away from formal leaders in the accomplishment of the organisational goals and teachers take responsibility and accountability for leadership practices" (Grant, 2010, p. 313)

4.4.3 LEVEL 3: PERCEPTIONS OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN DECISION MAKING AS DEMOCRATIC

All three SMT participants described themselves as transformational leaders:

> *Definitely I see myself as a transformational leader and wanting to also reflect where the school is and constantly evolving* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

> *I am democratic definitely, that will tie up with transformation* (I, SMT2, 29/09/2011)

> *My dominant style is transformational is because I want to empower people to allow them to lead* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).

Having perceived themselves as transformational leaders, these SMT members inferred that they directly or indirectly created the necessary conditions for the practice of democracy within the case school. If this was the case then they were involved in building the conditions for and encouraging democratic processes and participation (Wood, 2004). In fulfilling their roles as transformational leaders, the SMT members have not only transformed their individual understandings of self and others, but they "lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities" (Shields, 2006,

p. 77). The SMT members have recognised the injustices of the previous education system and have deliberately steered away from hierarchical leadership. According to TL1 the SMT1 has *"instilled ethics and positive things in people"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010) and there has been *"compassion"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). SMT2 purposefully created an environment wherein educators *"feel safe, comfortable and secure, and in such a setting, we are going to improve"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010).

Being a democratic leader means one must be transformative in one's leadership style and this is attested to by Ramphele (2008) whereby she claims that transformative leadership involves "credible visionary leadership that expands the boundaries of possibilities for all citizens, enabling them to contribute their talents, experience and skills to create a successful, prosperous democracy" (2008, p. 295). The perception that the principal was a visionary leader is highlighted below:

> *People look up to him for leadership and with his years of experience and vision, he is able to provide good direction* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010).

> *He is a visionary, who is able to delegate duties so that it would benefit us as individuals to grow* (Q19).

Not only was the principal described as a visionary leader, but the staff looked most of to the head for leadership. SMT1 wanted *"to empower others … to give people opportunities to lead"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010) and provide proper *"guidance and support"* for educators to grow as leaders. This signalled that the principal had a transformational agenda to fulfil and, in achieving this end, a conducive environment for democracy was created.

SMT3 too signalled that *"I try to work out what works best for that individual and help the individual to transform to become the best that they are, using every opportunity I get to offer leadership"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).

Through their leadership roles, the SMT created "an environment where people tap into their talents and commit their skills and knowledge to a common course of action" (Moloi, 2002, p.2). The SMT members at the case school have acknowledged that as transformational leaders they "remain in education not to carry on business as usual but to work for social change and social justice" (Brown, 2004, p. 96). Thus, it is my contention that the SMT's enactment of leadership through creating avenues for empowerment and a culture of collaboration also fell within Gunter's (2005) democratic distributed leadership characterisation.

4.5 SMT SUPPORT FOR SHARED DECISION MAKING

There was agreement that the SMT was supportive of teachers' efforts and the SMT was available, when called upon, to provide the necessary support to educators when they assumed leadership roles. TL3 described the SMT *as "the centre of leadership"* and in their functioning as leaders *"they play a big role in developing teachers to be leaders and to take decisions* (I, TL3, 15/12/2010). Excerpts from the interview bear testimony to the *"very accommodating and supportive"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010) nature of the SMT.

> *SMT plays a very supportive role because they always make themselves available to be part of the committee* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010).
>
> *We tend to lean heavily on our supervisors and the supervisors are very accommodating in assisting us and also developing us* (I, TL2, 9/12/2010).
>
> *When it comes to the coaching of the sport and the organisation of the programme and certain skills that is needed, the SMT is supportive* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010).

Without doubt, the data suggests that the SMT was constantly at hand and provided the necessary guidance, either by their presence, attitude, encouragement or professional development of educators that took a leading role in decision making. My observation revealed that there was a demonstration of huge support by the SMT to Level 1 teachers that took on leadership roles as well as encouragement for those educators who were not sufficiently confident to take on leadership responsibilities.

SMT3's practice of interacting individually with educators on an informal basis and encouraging them to take on leadership responsibilities bared positive results. Once insecure educators had overcome their initial fear and they took on a task, there was a need for the SMT to get involved as this *"allows them to know that I am given this task, I am in the deep end, but there are also lifelines out there which I can grab if I need to. That empowers them to become the best they are"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010). SMT3 firmly believed that while educators were empowered, the SMT should also provide them with *"a shoulder to lean on"* (I, 14/12/2010). Getting educators involved in decision making according to SMT3, was a process and *"once they are confident and believe in themselves they can do the best, and then we can start developing them and enhancing decision making"* (I, , 14/12/2010)

While SMT3 believed in the subtle approach of encouraging educators to be part of the decision making process, SMT1 uses a more direct approach such as

> *In a staff meeting I am not afraid to ask X what do you think of a certain issue because sometimes X can be very silent. So I make it a point to include as many people as possible … So I am getting many view on a particular issue across a spectrum so in that way you are encouraging, enhancing the capacity for decision making* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

SMT1 also believed that it was necessary to train educators, especially the novice educators to be critical thinkers and in so doing enhance their decision making skills. As for the seasoned educators, "*the SMT needs to include them, you see the policy should be of inclusivity, of including everyone and making people understand that they need to be part of the decision making process*" (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

While the SMT was "*the centre of leadership*" (I, TL3, 2/12/2010), SMT1 was adamant that decision making should be an inclusive process whereby educators "*realise that decision making is not restricted to the domain of management, everybody is involved in decision making*" (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

The SMT participants were in agreement over the issue of relinquishing authority and the need for accountability. SMT1 expressed his view on relinquishing authority and believed that:

> *In terms of relinquishing, giving away some of your power I don't have a problem with that because I think ultimately power should not be restricted and kept in the hands of the principal* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

These utterances communicated by SMT1 are congruent with views expressed by him thus far on distributing leadership and decision making initiatives. According to SMT1, relinquishing authority was premised on trust: "*you have confidence in and you know whatever you have given the person to run with is going to be 100% successful*" (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). This view is in line with the thinking of Timperley (2007) who believes that sharing leadership does not imply that a principal no longer has to take responsibility or is not ultimately accountable. It means principals do not have to do everything themselves, but rather they can confidently rely on teachers' knowledge and expertise to complete a task.

As mentioned, SMT3 too supported the notion of relinquishing authority by allowing others to join the leadership fold:

The relinquishing of authority is not as some people see it as disempowering, people believe that giving away your authority and you become less powerful....I will relish the day when I become obsolete, where all my authority and all my responsibilities can be completed by the educators (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).

This above view, expressed by SMT3, corroborates his position of wanting to empower educators and providing them with opportunities and support to take on leadership roles. SMT3's belief that distributed leadership must be *"micro managed"* (I, 14/12/2010) and decision making structures must be *"given empowerment with terms and references"* (I, 14/12/2010) *as* well as his position on being *"not very comfortable with total decentralisation"* (I, 14/12/2010) mirrors his stance on accountability. The SMT, in the main, was not averse to relinquishing responsibility, but they were resolute in their view that accountability was a critical component of leadership which *"at the end of the day you are still accountable for"* (I, SMT2, 29/09/2011) which invariably they accepted that "someone ought to be accountable for decisions" (Evans, 2009, p.587).

What is evident from my findings thus far is that there were structures in place for the distribution of leadership and decision making within the case school. Coupled with this, there were processes at work which were supportive of a distributive style of leadership and while the manner in which decision making was carried out was usually context driven, there is evidence to suggest that educators were involved in varying degrees in different structures. However, the process of shared decision can be further enhanced and it is to this discussion I proceed with.

4.6 SHARED DECISION CAN STILL BE FURTHER ENHANCED

As shown above there was much agreement that leadership and decision making was being distributed. In addition, the SMT played a supportive role through encouragement and guidance to level one educators who took a leading role in the decision making process. However, educators believed there were also other ways for the SMT to enhance the practice of decision making amongst level one educators.

Firstly, the presence of a Level 1 educator on the SMT does indicate that leadership and decision making is being distributed. The presence and participation of a Level 1 educator is not a *de jure* requirement in terms of the *South African Schools Act, 1996*, however, in practice many schools principals, as in this case feel it prudent to invite a member of the level 1 teaching corps to be part of the SMT. The task of the Level 1 educator on the SMT was not only to promote transparency in the manner in which the

SMT operated, but to also articulate the views and concerns of Level 1 educators and to add value to the discussions at SMT meetings. However, the Staff Representative on the SMT felt she should have been inducted into the post. She was not sure of her exact role function as she was *"told to take minutes, so when I first came in I was a bit apprehensive because I was not sure whether I was allowed to talk or just keep quiet"* (I. TL3, 2/12/2010).

Consequently, TL3, the Staff Representative, believed that *"opportunities are restricted"*, however these opportunities could be enhanced if the SMT provided the time and space for the Staff Representative to interact with Level 1 educators so that *"she can represent them"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010). TL3 also believed that after a meeting she be allowed in a formal structure to give feedback to the staff. This suggestion was also articulated by TL1 when she mentioned that *"there is a need for the reps to be given a slot during staff meeting to report back on issues relevant to the staff. (The Principal) usually does the report back"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010)

SMT1 acknowledged that, at times, the Staff Representative was silent; nevertheless, her presence was invaluable to a creation of a positive ambiance in the school. The contribution of the Staff Representative is captured in the following citation.

> *Even if the staff rep comes there and does not say much, but it's the way the SMT conducts its business in an open, transparent manner and in an absolutely fair manner, that also serves a function because it helps to boost morale in the school and helps in people taking ownership of the school.* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010)

My observations confirmed the concern of TL3 on the restricted participation of the Staff Representative on the SMT, *"like I don't know what I am really supposed to be doing here, besides taking minutes"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010). Besides feeling that they have not been fully capacitated to contribute effectively to the discussions, another hindering factor to their full participation was the staff representative's pre-occupation with recording the minutes of the meeting.

Secondly to encourage shared decision making, TL1 suggested that besides *"a teacher rep, invite others to sit in, not to be a watchdog, but to glean information and learn"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). While there was agreement that the SMT was generally supportive of teachers taking on leadership roles, TL3 was of the opinion that *"I don't think they have been sufficiently empowered, it is challenging and maybe in terms of support and workshops on leadership roles, there need to be more of that for level one educators"*

(I, TL3, 2/12/2010). Post-apartheid legislative mandates (*South African Schools Act, 2006; Norms and standards for Educators, 2000 and Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications, 2011*) amongst others, embraces the notion of shared leadership and emphasises that the teacher is a key role player in leadership, management and administration. With this as a focus, the teachers' demand for greater participation in school management and leadership is a legitimate one.

Thirdly, other educators suggested ways in which the SMT could augment the sharing of decision making. A support structure would serve to *"enhance the educator's confidence level"* (Q16) when involved in taking a leading role in decision making and inspire them to take on further leadership tasks. Fourthly, linked to this, was the recommendation for professional development opportunities in the form of *"workshops on leadership and management"* (Q7) which would lead to an *"increase in their knowledge base and skills"* (Q2). Fifthly, two educators suggested rotation of roles and duties annually as this would create *"opportunities for all educators"* (Q6), thus dispersing one's experiences as well as distributing leadership and decision making. This idea of rotating duties was again highlighted when it was mentioned that *"they need to realise that tasks must be rotated, that's how we would grow"* (FGI, TL5, 28/09/2011).

Lastly, it was noted that the majority of educators focussed on what others should do, more especially the SMT to enhance the distribution of shared decision making, without giving attention to how they could contribute to enhancing shared decision making. In this regard, one educator mentioned, *"the opportunities are there but we also need to take it"* (FGI, TL5, 28/09/2011).

4.7 CHALLENGES TO SHARED DECISION MAKING

Educators in the case school indicated that there were challenges that they encountered to distributed leadership and shared decision making. Challenges highlighted by educators included resistance and lack of support from peers (5 educators), accommodating diverse viewpoints (5 educators), time constraints (4 educators), lack of consistency (2educators) and lack of opportunities (2 educators) Reference was also made to such challenges as the SMT's approach to leadership, attitude of other educators to those that take on leadership roles, the lack of support from the Department of Education to encourage decentralisation and shared decision making, the school context, self-imposed barriers and time constraints. However, due to the length

constraints of this dissertation, only the three most pertinent challenges have been privileged for discussion. These are lack of peer support, time constraints and self-imposed barriers.

4.7.1 A LACK OF PEER SUPPORT

Many participants in the study believed that their colleagues were supportive of them taking on a leading role in decision making processes in the school. Descriptions such as *"encouraging", "trust my decision" "have faith in my decisions"* or *"comfortable with it"* were used to describe the support received from peers.

However, there were hint that this general support not always being present. Certain statements were qualified by such terms as *"at times", "some", "most"* and *"generally"*. More direct reference to the negative attitude of some educators was captured in statements such as *"others sarcastic and envious"* (Q3) and *"show disregard if not to their liking"* (Q18). The existence of feelings of negativity towards educators involved in decision-making is underpinned by the following statement:

> *Some educators are resistant to ideas and inputs from level one educators who take on leadership roles, they probably feel intimidated or that educator is not senior enough…and they may therefore not be co-operative* (I, TL2, 9/12/2010).

Correspondingly, TL2 stressed that there were some educators on the staff that questioned her ability to be a leader and they gave the impression that she was not *"qualified enough to be part of certain decision making"* (I, TL2, 9/12/2010).

Resistance from peers was also raised by the primary participants and this becomes evident when *"they may not get the support of other teachers"* (I, TL2, 9/12/2010) or when some educators *"do not fully support one's initiatives"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). SMT3 observed that some educators did not lend support to the initiatives of educators due to their *"personal aspirations"* and in their attempt to climb the career ladder *"they will try subtly without making too much of waves to cause obstructions or to pass negative comments or to say something just to throw a spanner in the works"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010). SMT3 also recognised that in educators fulfilling their personal aspirations they *"do not want others to succeed or if they succeed too much, it will make (them) look ordinary. This is where the ego comes to play … and egos get dented"* (I, SMT3, 14/12/2010).

SMT1 however, did not view the negative attitude of educators *"as a major hassle"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010) and usually according to the SMT1 *"if there is a teacher leader in*

charge of something, they show respect for that teacher and whatever initiative or decision that teacher has to make" (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

In the final analysis, it cannot be denied that within the case school *"if someone is in a leadership positions, there are individuals that attack them on a personal level. It is mean, but they throw challenges to catch the teacher off-guard"* (I, SMT2, 29/09/2011); however, this negativity and lack of support for those assuming a leading role in decision making, while more the exception than the norm, was nevertheless reported as a barrier to distributed leadership and shared decision making.

4. 7. 2 TIME CONSTRAINTS

Time constraints also acted as a barrier to teachers' engagement in leadership and this was noted by TL2 who commented that teachers *"don't want to commit because it is going to infringe on their time and lifestyle* (I. TL2, 9/12/2010). Time constraints referred to by educators was also associated with personal lifestyle demands. TL3 also subscribed to these views and indicated that "*sometime it may affect your classroom time, sometime it may affect your personal time"* (I. TL3, 2/12/2010). SMT1 was of the view that being involved in leadership and decision making roles *"means that they have to share their time with their teaching, etc. and that obviously impacts negatively on teaching"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). This loss in teaching and learning time was also commented on by TL3. TL3's concern was genuine as the time table was sometimes adjusted for educators who took on a leading role in decision making to consult with other members. If an educator was involved in planning an event that involved learners, then learners were sometimes taken out of the classroom in preparation for that event. Many teachers felt that these events were *"in their way and disrupting their learning programme"* (I. TL3, 2/12/2010). A similar sentiment was expressed in the statement "*learners are called out of your class because something comes up and the children suffer"* (FGI, TL7, 28/09/2011)

Getting teachers to be a part of decision making was not always possible as *"time is always a factor with that"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). TL1 stressed that there were huge demands on the teacher and on a personal level taking a leading role in decision making structures meant that she *"is spreading (herself) too thin"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010) and in her attempts to complete her work *"she sleeps at about 11 o' clock every single night"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). Similarly, TL2 observed that teachers sometimes *"don't want to commit because it is going to infringe on their time and lifestyle"* (I, 9/12/2010). TL1 and TL2 both took a leading role in decision making structures and were able to do so

because they sacrificed much of their personal time, so much so that TL2 believed that *"I am at a stage in my life now where I can give it my all, I can give it a 100%" (I, TL2, 9/12/2010)*. TL2 acknowledged that not everyone was at that stage in their lives where they could dedicate all their time to school and she believed that, *"We have quite a few teachers at school that could take on stronger leadership roles, but they tend not to because they feel that they will not fulfil their duties [due to time constraints]"* (I, TL2, 9/12/2010). Evidence presented indicated teachers view "balancing full time teaching and informal leadership roles within a school has been found to be a crucial hindrance" (Hlatywayo, 2010, p.31) to taking a leading role in decision making.

4.7.3 SELF-IMPOSED BARRIERS

Besides context-driven challenges that faced educators who assumed leadership roles, the data also highlighted that teachers themselves created their own barriers. A lack of initiative falls within this category. This attitude of not wanting to be involved in leading and decision making was conveyed by TL3: *"people shy away sometimes because they don't want to be leaders and they do not want to take responsibility"* (I, 2/12/2010). Another educator indicated that because of her *"personality I wouldn't be immediately recognised as a leader because I have a tendency to be playful..... I am not taken seriously as a leader"* (FGI, TL7, 28/09/2011).

Some of the challenges to decision making expressed by the secondary participants were in turn echoed by the primary participants. Fear of failure as a barrier to taking on a leading role in decision making was mentioned. This could be attributed to a *"lack of skills, especially as we have a lot of young people"* (I. TL1, 15/12/2010). Thus, self-imposed barriers were not unique to the case school as literature reveals that a teacher's background, whether personal or professional, sometimes discourages the open pressing of a point of view and this may result in non-participation in decision making. In addition, some teachers perceive the invitation to share in decision making as not sincere (Allen, 1993). TL2, in commenting on the lack of skills, felt that some educators:

> *Haven't taken the time to read up and become familiar with educational matters and the ever-changing policies. It's like snowballing on them and they don't have the effectiveness to manage these leadership roles. They lack the skills because they are not pushing themselves hard enough* (I, TL2, 9/12/2010).

While TL3 indicated there were instances of educators shying away from taking responsibility. Shying away from decision making could be due to a number of factors

and Griffin (1995) attributes this to a lack of confidence, resulting in a feeling that the audience or participants were intimidating TL1 has observed that:

> *Fortunately in our school, it is not one of the things that affects a large number of people, maybe a few people who feel that they do not want to come on board and get involved in decision making ... I don't see this as a challenge in terms of decision making ... People are not evasive when it comes to getting involved in decision making* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

I concur with SMT1 that self-imposed barriers to educators participating in shared decision making were minimal in the case study school and most educators took up the leadership challenge when confronted with it.

4.8 CONCLUSION

To sum up it is clear that evidence from across the data sets suggests that there is a general ethos in the case study school to decision making being inclusive and involving all educators. In light of this, there were a number of school structures within which level 1 educators take a leading role. While decisions in staff meetings were usually taken after a discussion and consensus reached, there was a call for more staff meetings, as decisions taken by SMT, which the participants believed were at times necessary, needed to be formally communicated to the staff. There being two phases within the school, it was found that the phases operated differently and this was in the main due to the personalities and the approaches of the HoDs chairing the meeting. Decisions at the Foundation Phase meeting were usually arrived at through discussions and consensus, however, there were questions raised by some participants regarding the leadership of the head of the phase. Participants acknowledged that the HoDs in the Senior Primary Phase were most supportive and encouraging, but questioned the sometimes autocratic approach of SMT3. Participants generally felt that their voices were often not heard. Attempts to supress educators' voices speaks to an absence of true democracy and thus evidence does not support that there is absolute distributed leadership at the Senior Primary Phase.

On the question of the degree of distribution in the decision making process, the majority of educators occupied some form of leadership role, but this was mostly classroom or school based. There was only one educator who occupied a leadership role beyond the school. There was evidence that suggested that decision making could be characterised as authorised (level 1), dispersed (level 2) and democratic (level 3) (Grant, 2010 ;Gunter, 2005). Most participants perceived that their participation was

more authorised, instead of being dispersed or democratic. While there was evidence of emergent leadership, this aspect needed to be further enhanced. There were a number of challenges that the participants experienced or perceived to have experienced. The SMT in general, encouraged and provided opportunities for educators in the case school to lead and share in the decision making process. Despite the challenges forwarded by the participants, this did not adversely affect teachers from taking on a leading role in decision making.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND PROPOSITIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Our relatively young democracy has done remarkably well in shattering the shackles of apartheid and infusing the notion of a shared vision for transformation as promulgated by our constitution. No doubt, South Africa was steeped in authoritarianism, from the British colonial culture to the Calvinistic streak of Afrikaner nationalism. Adding to this is the African system of governance which is premised on authoritarianism (Ramphele, 2008). As such, education in this country followed a hierarchical structure with decision making being a top-down activity. The *South African Schools Act* (1996) informed by the constitution charted the way for a transformation in education that advocated flatter decision making structures.

My study investigated the enactment of decision making as an activity of school leadership. While the success of my study, lies in the main, in the findings presented in Chapter Four, the methodology as well as the review of the relevant literature and the appropriateness of the theoretical framing for this study, adds value to the overall research. The aim of this chapter is to present a conclusion for the entire study. A summary of the key findings, as discussed in Chapter Four is presented. This is followed by a reflection of the case study methodology employed in this study. Significant findings that emerged from my study were highlighted in the form of themes. Based on my findings recommendations are presented on the practice of shared decision making for the case school and for other schools that may share a similar context. Further to this, suggestions are forwarded for future research in the arena of decision making in schools. This chapter closes by presenting an overall impression of my study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

In delving into the summary of findings, I examine the enactment of decision making in the case school. My findings revealed that the research was successful as I was able to find answers to all three research questions by examining the rich and nuanced data

across the data sets. In presenting the summary of findings I look at the main themes that emerged from each of the three research questions. Such themes included the availability of structures and its enhancing or inhibiting properties for shared decision, the principal as an enabler or disabler of distributed leadership, the presence of the distributed leadership as characterised by Gunter (2005), the SMT's support for shared decision making, further strategies to enhance shared decision making and the challenges to decision making.

5.2.1 DECISION MAKING STRUCTURES

This section highlights the findings of the first research question. Within the case school, there were various decision making structures wherein level one educators' involvement and influence varied. That most educators perceived themselves as more leaders than followers was abundantly evident from my findings. A mere 21% of educators, those that were new and mostly inexperienced, labelled themselves as followers. Of significance is that the case school fostered a culture of leadership and educators embraced this culture and it was not a case of *"waiting for the principal to do this or do that"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). Of the level one participants, 68% did not succumb to the fixed leader-follower dualism (Gronn, 2000). I found decision making to be situational as the context in which educators found themselves determined the dominance of the leadership role they played.

Situations that required the co-ordination of events such as the Market Day, Awards Function, Sports and Fund Raising programmes, involved a process usually led by level one educators. These educators were accountable for the decisions of the committees they were part of. Evidence pointed to these structures being democratic and decision making was shared as expressed by TL4: *"In our school there are so many opportunities for the sharing of decision making"* (FGI, 28/09/2011). However, involvement of level one educators in SMT meetings was limited. Although, level one educators had a voice in this structure, their influence was muted and it was often perceived that they were *"just taking minutes and I think being on SMT…they should be given more"* (I, TL3, 2/12/2010). There was general consensus amongst educators that the staff meeting was a democratic gathering and decisions were arrived through a process of discussion and consensus. However, there were instances when authoritarianism was necessary and in such instances the *"principal exercises his autocratic style and lays down the rule"* (I, SMT2, 29/09/2011). This was accepted as a necessary process by the educators. Some educators believed that at times there was a

breakdown in communication as some decisions implemented by the management team, which they acknowledged was necessary, were not formally brought to their attention.

There were mixed perceptions to meetings conducted at phase level. While, there was consensus that the Foundation Phase meeting was a democratic process and decision making was shared, participants felt that the head of the phase was *"very inconsistent, not strong, can fall either way and has shown a weakness towards some and allows herself to be bullied"* (I, SMT2, 29/09/2012), and in so doing, revealed wanting leadership traits. On the other hand, the Senior Primary Phase meetings were perceived differently. There was unanimity amongst the participants that SMT3 encouraged and supported educators' efforts; however, the tone of the meetings was often strained as many of the participants believed that SMT3 was authoritarian in his approach. Statements such as *"dictating at times"* (Q1), *"requests and expects the educator to follow"* (Q3 and Q5) and *"got all the power"* (Q14) and *"come across to us, it a no, no kind of thing"* (FGI, TL6, 28/09/2011) were reflections on the SMT3's authoritarian slant. While the platform for shared decision making was evident, educators felt that their voices and concerns were often not heard as SMT3 often had a preconceived plan.

5.2.2 DEGREE OF DISTRIBUTION OF LEADERSHIP

In responding to the second research question: to what degree is there a distribution of leadership in the decision making process? I examined the level of involvement of educators in the various decision making structures in the case school. In addition, I assessed whether the distribution of leadership in decision making, using Gunter's (2005) three characteristics of distributed leadership, was more authorised, dispersed or democratic. I believe adequate data was gathered to successfully answer this question.

I established that level one educators were involved in varying degrees in decision making structures in the case school. Their involvement ranged from being members to co-ordinators of the various school committees. Because of a culture of a collective vision and shared decision making, even ordinary members of committees assumed leadership roles and were accountable for decision making through the establishment of sub-committees. Leadership in the case school was not the sole responsibility of the co-ordinator, but was a shared undertaking. In most instances these committees were *"headed by a level one educator"* (FGI, TL 4, 28/09/2011)

5.2.2.1 Characterising Distribution of Decision making as Authorised, Dispersed and Democratic

Using Gunter's (2005) characterisations of distributed leadership, I was able to characterise acts of decision making in the case school as authorised, dispersed or democratic. The case school exhibited strains of all three characterisations of distributed decision making, with authorised distributed leadership featuring most prominently.

Decision making as authorised occurred in the case school and usually stemmed *"from the principal... eventually teachers take on different roles such as mentoring, learning area heads, etc.* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). Taking into account the transformational agenda of the principal of *"wanting to also reflect where the school is and constantly evolving, changing things for the better in collaboration with everybody"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010), the manner in which tasks were authorised was more a case of empowerment, rather than mere delegation. There were views that *"the non-negotiable"* (I, SMT 3, 14/12/2010) aspects of management, such as the adherence to departmental policy prescripts was a case of authorised distribution of decision making. In this instance, setting up phase and learning area committees and decisions that emanated from these discussions were categorised as authorised. With regards to accountability, it was explained that *"when we (SMT) distribute leadership, we don't distribute accountability, the accountability still falls on managers, it is our responsibility"* (I, SMT3 – 14/12/2010). Hence, all of the school structures were deemed to be authorised by the SMT as decision making bodies as the SMT were ultimately accountable for the decisions made by these structures. While the structures were authorised by the SMT, the data indicated that the discussions and the mode of decision making was not autocratic.

The case school presented the staff with a number of opportunities for dispersing the distribution of leadership. On the question of whether leadership and decision making had an emergent property, the evidence across the data sets pointed to this phenomenon as still being in its infancy. Data garnered from TL1 indicated that she had initiated or volunteered to head committees or projects and as such she satisfies Gronn's (2000) take on distributed leadership as being "fluid and emergent rather than a fixed phenomenon" (p .324). Passing reference was made to two other educators as being emergent leaders, but these appeared to be once of activities. I agree with SMT 3 that in most instances *"I am yet to see someone totally stepping up and say: 'I am an emerging leader"* (I, SMT 3, 14/12/2010).

While the emergent nature of leadership of teachers was optimally evident in the school, there was significant reference to leadership being dispersed. This type of decision making was most evident in the manner in which the various fund raising and events committees functioned. While each of the committees, such as athletics, market day, awards and debutantes ball to name a few, was headed by a single person, the nature of the events created opportunities for other educators to be included into the fold of decision making. Leadership was spread through the formation of sub-committees. In the instance of the Debutantes Ball, besides an overall co-ordinator, no fewer than eight other leadership and decision making structures were created through the formation of sub-committees.

The transformational approach to leadership practiced by the principal created a climate conducive for the practice of democratic decision making. The SMT on the whole recognised the injustices of Apartheid education and adopted a transformative approach to school leadership by "dismantling the top-down approach and enabling flatter leadership structures" (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). To a large degree the SMT have made huge strides to reach the value ends of transformative leadership which is "to enhance equity, social justice, and the quality of life; to expand access and opportunity; to encourage respect for difference and diversity" and to "strengthen democracy" (Astin and Astin, 2000, p.11) However, to practice democratic decision making exclusively where there is "equality of power relations thus remains one of the most perplexing challenges" (Rizvi, 1989, p. 230).

5.2.3 CHALLENGES TO SHARED DECISION MAKING

The focus of research question three was to garner data of the challenges perceived or experiences by educators at the school. Distributed leadership and shared decision making was not on the Apartheid Government's agenda on how schools should be managed and led. In direct contrast, our new democratic government recommends that leadership and management "should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage" (DoE, 1996b, p. 8). "The scale and scope of transformation in South Africa and in education, in particular, "is without precedence" (Ramphele, 2008, p. 13). To make the shift from an authoritarian school culture to one that embraces the ideals of the new democracy is not without its challenges. Principals have to grapple with the notion of relinquishing authority yet, at the same time, not abandon their responsibility. Fortunately, in the case school the principal did not have a dilemma with relinquishing authority because he

believed that *"power should not be restricted and kept in the hands of the principal"* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010). This belief was premised on the trust he had his staff would make certain that tasks would be *"100% successful and it is going to be done properly" "* (I, SMT1, 14/12/2010).

A number of challenges to shared decision making were evident across the data sets. These include resistance and lack of support from peers, accommodating all parties, self-imposed barriers, time constraints, lack of consistency, and lack of opportunity. The data suggested that in most of the categories listed above, a mere 5% of the participants believed these categories posed a barrier to shared decision making. The three biggest challenges perceived to have occurred were resistance from peers (21%), accommodating diverse views (21%) and time constraints (16%). These challenges did not have a destabilising or adverse effect on the practice of shared decision making and I concur with Pitkin and Shumer (1982) that shared decision making "happens always in a context of conflict, imperfect knowledge, and uncertainty...what matters is not unanimity but discourse. The substantive interest…remains contested as much as shared" (p. 47).

5.2.4 THE ENHANCEMENT OF SHARED DECISION MAKING

Research Question three being two-fold also raised the issue of the school fostered the development of shared decision making. It was abundantly clear by the participants that there was development and enhancement of decision. The principal's participatory approach to leadership acted as a catalyst for shared decision making. This ambiance of shared decision making was also evident amongst SMT members, save for occasional perceived lapses of authoritarianism. That the SMT was able to strike a balance between relinquishing authority without abandoning accountability suggests that the SMT was comfortable with sharing power and was confident that the authorised tasks would be completed satisfactorily. The display of trust by the SMT elevated educators at the case school to take on greater leadership responsibilities and they felt empowered at times to initiate their own programmes. The availability of SMT members to provide support and guidance and to assuage reservations of those that took on leadership responsibilities goaded educators at the case school to take a greater lead in decision making situations.   While it was acknowledged that the SMT encouraged the spread of shared decision making, educators assessed that the shared decision making process was not perfect and proposed practical changes to further advance the decision making process.

5.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

In investigating the enactment of decision making as an activity of school leadership, I found the case study approach, most suitable. Using a single case, this study being qualitative in nature, allowed for the collection of rich data using a multi-method mode of data collection. The multi-method approach injected credibility to my study and I believe the triangulation and crystallisation of data added to the trustworthiness of the study. The case study approach allowed me to analyse the phenomenon of decision making in a particular context and, in so doing, I was able to confirm the findings of existing theories (Goddard and Melville, 2001) of distributed leadership as advanced by Gronn (2000) and Spillane (2004). The case study approach also allowed for the use of thematic content analysis to find recurring themes across data sets and, in so doing, I believe I was able to capture a nuanced enactment of decision making in the case school.

5.4 CONCEPTUALISING PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

Drawing from evidence from across the data sets, I present a conceptual framework of the level of participation of educators in the various school decision making situations. Figure 3 has been conceptualised as a framework for the level of participation in decision making from expanded to restricted.
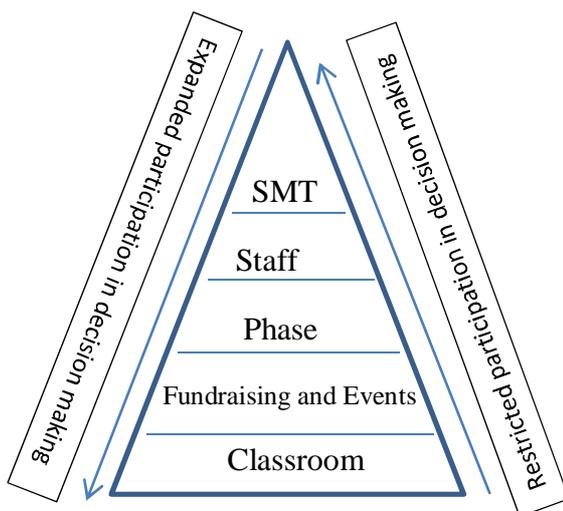

Figure 3: Framework for level of participation in decision making

My hierarchical framework presents the five main structures of decision making in the case school; the classroom, fundraising and events committees, phase meetings, staff meetings and SMT meetings. While there was involvement of level one educators in all of the above mentioned structures, their degree of participation and influence varied. The manner in which I developed the framework follows.

The data revealed that teachers in the case school had the:

> *liberty in making decisions, when it comes to classroom management...there are so many different aspects of classroom management that we can take decisions, e.g. arrangement of furniture, discipline strategies from our own reading, text book, internet, so on, pastoral care, all of those things we I can make the decision on how to handle different children with different personalities and characteristics (I, TL2, 9/12/2010).*

This perception of educators being in control of all classroom decision making allowed me to position the classroom context as the most expansive area of educator participation in decision making.

Educator involvement in decisions relating to fundraising events and school functions, expounded upon extensively in Chapter Four, revealed that leadership and decision making was also widely dispersed in this area. Most participants believed that *"it is the bulk of the fund raising events where there is distributed leadership"* (FGI, TL5, 28/09/2011). The formation of sub-committees in each structure provided opportunities for the majority of educators to be involved in decision making.

Decision making at phase level was restricted to only those teachers who belonged to a particular phase, either the foundation phase or senior primary phase. While there was input from educators at phase level, much of the decision making at this level at the case school was curriculum related and was influenced by the DoE's curriculum policy prescripts. Thus participation of educators in decision making at the phase level was not as expansive as educators' participation in fundraising events. At the phase level, educators' participation in decision making was therefore more regulated.

Moving on to staff meetings as a structure of decision making, the participation of educators at this level in the case school was less evident. While there was general consensus that the process of decision making at staff meetings was through discussion and consensus, educators were *"all given an equal opportunity, but some people do not make use of it. There are few people that make use of it and others choose to remain quiet"* (I, TL1, 15/12/2010). Further to this, the data exposed that there was a limited

number of staff meetings and some issues were not tabled for discussion at a formal staff meeting. Moreover, some participants believed that the proceedings of the *"staff meetings are rushed"* (FGI, TL7, 28/12/2011) at times which restricted educators opportunities to engage in matters that they deemed important.

Finally, in relation to the framework (Figure 3), the data suggested that the SMT was the structure that permitted the least amount of input by level one educators. Although, there was a staff representative on the SMT, insufficient opportunities were made available for the staff representative to become involved, both in terms of empowerment and time and space for engagement with other staff members to effectively contribute to decision making at SMT level.

I acknowledge that the framework is limited as it speaks to the restricted or expanded opportunity for participation in decision making structures at the case school. However, this framework might be able to be utilised by other schools as a gauge to examine the level of participation in decision making in the various structures within their context and, in so doing, confirm or refute my findings or expand upon the framework.

5.5 PROPOSITIONS TO ENHANCE THE PRACTICE OF SHARED DECISION MAKING

My research, being a small-scale case study, cannot be generalised. Thus the proposals to enhance the practice of decision making are highly contextualised and are applicable only to the case school. However, other schools that share a parallel context to the case school may find these recommendations applicable to their milieu. While in the main my study found that there existed a committed ethos of shared decision making in the case school, there was still space to strengthen the practice of shared decision making. It is to the propositions for enhancing shared decision making that I now turn.

5.5.1 FORMALISE LINES OF COMMUNICATION

This study established that, at times, decisions taken at SMT level or at the SGB level were not formally or timeously communicated to the staff. Decisions were often casually communicated at break time in the staffroom. At this forum, all educators were not present as these were not scheduled briefings. To formalise the announcement of decisions and allow for teachers' inputs, I suggest that more frequent staff meetings be held. This will not only keep educators updated on school related matters, but could

also allow more time for discussion at staff meeting as fewer items would be on the agenda. Some participants alluded to the staff meeting at times being a rushed event, limiting opportunities for contributing to the decisions. To formally keep teachers in the know, I suggest staff briefings be held before the start of the formal school day on a regular basis. I acknowledge that it is not always possible to schedule frequent or daily meetings in a vibrant school, thus an additional mode of communication could be in the form of a written memorandum. This would keep all educators in the loop as to the happenings of the school.

5.5.2 CREATE TIME AND SPACE FOR STAFF REPRESENTATIVES TO ENAGE WITH THE STAFF

The staff representative on the SMT and the educator representatives on the SGB allows for educator inputs in decision making on these bodies. To enhance the contribution of these representatives on staff related matters, I propose a formal channel be established for input from staff before an SMT or SGB meeting. The staff representatives sitting on these decision making bodies must not be seen as mere recorders of minutes, but rather their leadership potential should be allowed to flourish at these meetings. Space and time could be created by the SMT for the representatives to communicate with educators to facilitate effective inputs at the SMT or SGB meetings. I further recommend that opportunities for feedback on sanctioned matters for staff consumption be made available to these representatives. Greater educator involvement would ensure educators taking ownership for decisions which would instil a greater sense of work ethic.

5.5.3 ESTABLISH A FORMAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

Besides the case school having a large cohort of highly experienced educators, there were a number of novice educators at the school. These inexperienced teachers often shied away from taking a leading role in decision making. To build these educators confidence levels and leadership skills, an opportunity exists for the launch of a formal mentorship programme. Such a programme would initiate educators that lack confidence to take a leading role in decision making to self-reflect and explore their leadership potential. Partnering novice educators with skilled educators, not only opens the up avenues for the novice educators to dabble in school leadership, but would also enhance the value of the experienced educators as leaders.

5.5.4 SCHOOL BASED CAPACITY BUILDING

Although the DoE has committed itself to decentralisation, as reflected in the *South Africans schools Act of 1996*, there was consensus amongst the participants that the DoE has been silent on the issue of empowering all levels of educators on enhancing shared decision making in schools. Grant (2010) correctly assesses that "despite an enabling education policy framework, participation and collaboration of all educators in essential leadership practices such as school-level decision-making, remained largely at the level of rhetoric" (p. 343) and the "most serious challenge to education transformation continues to be effective policy implementation" (Motala, 1998, p. 498).

In order to bridge the policy-practice divide, the SMT and the staff at the case school have an opening to explore avenues to enable greater on site capacity at the case school. Rizvi (1989) advocates that "we use this rhetoric in creative ways to ensure the extension of democratic forms with which we are familiar" (p. 232). At the time of writing, the DoE had given no indication that Foundation Phase educators would be orientated to implement the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements* (CAPS) for implementation in 2012. The DoE's shortcoming in this and other areas, while not the ideal situation could be turned into a capacity building exercise for the school. Educators in teams could interrogate the policy statements and make decisions on the way forward for implementation. Such an exercise could create opportunities for educators to play a leading role in curriculum related decision making. I agree with Beadie (1996) who argues that "shared decision making can help bridge the pedagogical and political gap" (p. 79).

5.5.5 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SMT

The SMT participants viewed themselves as transformational leaders and much of this trait was evident in the manner in which these participants led the school. Being educators that once practised in a highly centralised and authoritarian system of schooling and school management, it is not easy to completely liberate oneself of these traits and, as observed in the case school, a top-down approach was sometimes the default position. Based on the premise that leadership can be learnt (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001), it is recommended that the SMT enter a leadership programme at a higher education institution. Such a programme would sharpen and enhance the SMT's leadership skills and, in so doing, become more transformational and participatory in their approach. Programmes such as the Advanced Certificate in Education in School Leadership) and post graduate education leadership and management degrees could aid

school leaders to "re-evaluate the balance between individual authority and a more democratic dimension of leadership" (Mestry & Singh, 2007, p. 483).

5.6 PROPOSITIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

My study being a small scale research of one case school, the findings cannot be generalised. To be able to make some form of generalisation, I recommend that the scope of the study be broadened to include several case schools within the school ward, circuit or district. Data from such a study could then be generalised within the location of study to demonstrate how decision making is enacted. Another area for possible further research is a comparative study of two or more case schools; wards, circuits or districts.

While I found the case study appropriate as a research approach, given the scope of my study, I propose that in advancing the study of the enactment of decision making, an ethnographic approach be considered. This approach would suit educators researching their own sites as the "process requires prolonged field work" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 36). Through the ethnographic approach, the culture of decision making can be probed to provide an alternative dimension to that of the case study approach.

In the final analysis, the impact of shared decision making cannot be sufficiently justified or entirely supported if it does not impact positively on teaching and learning. Theorists such as Herberg (1987) and Likert (1967) conclude that shared decision making leads to a more effective organisation and higher staff morale. Higher staff moral usually translates to greater teacher efficacy with could ultimately lead to improved learner performance. Indications are that there is very little empirical evidence to link shared decision making to improved school performance. In the few studies that have been conducted, the senior certificate examination has been used as a benchmark to draw a correlation between shared decision making and improved learner performance. Until 2009 there was no accepted yardstick to make such a correlation in the primary school. With the introduction of the Annual National Assessments (ANA) from grades one to six, a possibility exists for research in primary schools in this area.

5.7 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Our democracy, while still in its infancy, has made much inroad into transforming education in South Africa. Education transformation is not without its challenges and should not be viewed as an event but rather as a process. The sharing of decision making in our schools cannot be expected to follow an ideal framework because a hierarchical management approach is still very much the practice of the day. Shared leadership and decision making in our schools is the vision for which we must strive and as long as we subscribe to the ideals of democracy and transformation, there is hope that school leadership will eventually be an all-inclusive phenomenon. In the meantime, "democratic practice provides the grounds for optimism, and surely such optimism remains the most important of all ingredients in education" (Rizvi, 1989, p. 232).

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APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONSENT TO THE PRINCIPAL

P.O. Box 727
Luxmi
3207
1 August 2010

The Principal

CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEACH

I am a M. Ed. Student (Student Number 207526557) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. In order to fulfil the requirements of the degree I am expected to conduct a research project. My research topic is: Decision Making as an activity of School Leadership: A Case Study. The study will aim to determine how decision making is practiced across various school structures; the degree to which there is a distribution of leadership in the decision making process as well as the challenges in sharing decision making process and what strategies, if any, are in place to develop and enhance decision making. Decision making within a Distributed Leadership framework is an emerging field of research in South Africa and it needs to be extended. In this regard I have chosen your school as a case study because I believe that your school will provide valuable input in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on this concept.

I would appreciate your permission to conduct research in your school. Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance or competence of educators and by no means is it a commission of inquiry. The identities of all who participate in this study will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I undertake to uphold the autonomy of all participants and they will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences themselves. However, participants will be asked to complete a consent form. In the interest of the participants, feedback will be given to them at the end of the study.

My supervisor is Dr. Irene Mudvidziwa who can be contacted on 033 260 60995 at the Faculty of Education, Room 46, Pietermaritzburg Campus (School of Education and Development). My contact numbers are 0845560787, 033-3910878 (home). You may contact my supervisor or myself should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.

Yours faithfully

R.V. Moodley

APPENDIX B: DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY PRINCIPAL

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I... (full name of Principal) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and grant Mr R.V. Moodley permission to conduct a case study research at ....Primary School.

....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL   DATE

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPANTS

P.O. Box 727
Luxmi
3207
1 August 2010

Dear Participant

PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am a M. Ed. Student (Student Number 207526557) at the University KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. In order to fulfil the requirements of the degree I am expected to conduct a research project. My research topic is: Decision Making as an activity of School Leadership: A Case Study. The study will aim to determine how decision making is practiced across various school structures, the degree to which there is a distribution of leadership in the decision making process as well as the challenges in sharing decision making process and what strategies, if any, are in place to develop and enhance decision making. Decision making within a Distributed Leadership framework is an emerging field of research in South Africa and it needs to be broadened. In this regard I have chosen your school as a case study because I believe that you will provide valuable input in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on this concept. In this regard I would greatly appreciate it if you could be a participant in my research project.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance or competence of educators and by no means is it a commission of inquiry! The identities of all who participate in this study will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I undertake to uphold the autonomy of you as a participant and you will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves. However, as a participant will be asked to complete a consent form. In the interest of you the participant, feedback will be given to you at the end of the study.

My supervisor is Dr. Irene Mudvidziwa who can be contacted on 033 260 60995 at the Faculty of Education, Room 46, Pietermaritzburg Campus (School of Education and Development). My co-supervisor is Dr. Callie Grant who can be contacted on 033-2606185. My contact number is 033 3910878

You may contact my supervisor or myself should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.

Yours faithfully

_____

Ronnie Moodley

APPENDIX D: DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY PARTICIPANTS

DECLARATION OF CONSENT:

I, _____ **(full names of participant)**
do hereby give consent to Mr. R.V. Moodley to use me as a participant in his
research project.

I am aware that:

- I will be used as a participant and will be observed, interviewed and be
  expected to complete a questionnaire on Decision Making.
- The information will be used as part of his research project.
- The interview process and completing of the questionnaire will take up
  some of my time.
- The information will be published in the form of a thesis and will be
  reviewed by others.

Having taken note of the above information I freely and voluntarily agree to
take part in the research process and acknowledge that I have not been forced to
do so. I also declare that I have been briefed about the research project and fully
understand my part in it. I am also aware that information divulged by me will
be kept in strict confidence but that the findings of the research will be published
in the form of a thesis. I also understand that I will not receive any payment for
my participation in this research.

 Mr R.V. Moodley is hereby authorised to use any information from interviews,
observations and questionnaires in so far as they relate to me as part of the
research project he has undertaken.

_____   _____

    Signature   of Participant   **Date**

APPENDIX E: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF PRIMARY PARTICIPANTS

NAME: _____ POST LEVEL: _____

PLEASE PLACE A TICK IN THE APPRORIATE COLUMN

1. Gender

Male		Female	

2. Age

18-30		31-40		41-50		51+	

3. Your formal qualification is: Indicate qualification

Below M+3		M+3		M+4		M+5 and above		

4. Nature of employment

Permanent		Temporary		Seconded	

5. Years of teaching experience

0-5yrs		6-10yrs		11-15yrs		16+yrs	

6. Years in current school

<5	5-9	10-14	15- 20	>20

7. Phase that you are teaching?

Foundation		Intermediate		Senior	

8. Leadership positions held (can have more than one tick)

Acting HOD	
Grade Head	
Learning Area chairperson	
Sports Code Convenor	
Fund Raising Event – Co-ordinator	
School Function Co-ordinator	
Staff Social Co-ordinator	
SMT Member	
SGB member	
SDT co-ordinator	
Co-curricular co-ordinator	
OTHER – please specify	

APPENDIX F: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE- SMT MEMBERS

SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH SMT (Duration 60 minutes)

1. What type of culture/ethos exists in your school?

2. What type of leadership style do you practice? Elaborate on why you say so.

3. The government has moved towards a more decentralised system of governance. How is this being enacted at school level?

4. What support structures does the Department of Education have in place for management to practice school based management and encourage shared decision making?

5. What is the process involved in the making of decisions?

6. Is there a distribution of leadership in decision making? Elaborate on this.

7. Is the distribution of decision making more authorised, emergent, dispersed or democratic? (Dependent on the response of question 6- if required the concepts will be clarified)

8. How do you view the need for accountability and the relinquishing of authority?

9. How do you think decision making can be developed and enhanced?

10. What do you do to enhance the spread of decision making (dependent on question 9)

11. What to you perceive or experience as some of the challenges to distributing decision making.

12. How would describe your role as a leader and a follower?

Questions indicated on this schedule will be used as a guide. Questions may be adapted to elicit further responses and questions may be individualised based on leadership and decision making practices noted during the period of observation.

APPENDIX G: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – POST LEVEL ONE

SEMI- STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER LEADERS (Duration 60 minutes)

1. Are you involved in decision making? If so, what is your degree of involvement?

2. In what situation/context is decision making enacted? Describe these situations.

3. What is the process involved in the making of decisions?

4. Do you think that the opportunities provided to lead by making decisions is more authorised, emergent, dispersed or democratic? (if required, concepts will be clarified)

5. How do teachers perceive/view those that take a leadership role and make decisions

6. What do you think about the style of leadership adopted by the SMT.

7. What has the SMT done to develop and enhance a more distributed form of leadership and created opportunities for educators to play a role in the decision making process? (will explain the term distributed leadership)

8. Does the SMT view you as a leader, if so, in what situations?

9. Do other teachers view you as a leader, if so, in what situations?

10. What challenges if any, do you think there is or have encountered to participation by level one educators in decision making.

11. Do you see yourself as a follower or leader and in what situations?

Questions indicated on this schedule will be used as a guide. Questions may be adapted to elicit further responses and questions may be individualised based on leadership and decision making practices noted during the period of observation

APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE- POST LEVEL I

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW (90 minutes)

1. How would you describe the role of the SMT in your school?

2. How do you see yourselves – as leaders or followers and in what situations?

3. What is the situation and the process involved when decisions are made? (At staff, Phase, Planning of events, etc.)

4. What are the opportunities that exist for the sharing of decision making?

5. What role is and should the SMT play to encourage the development of a shared form of decision making?

6. Relate some the situations, if any, where decision making is distributed

7. What are the challenges to shared decision making?

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL POST LEVEL 1 EDUCATORS

Decision Making
Questionnaire

Dear Educators

This questionnaire is part of my Masters of Education Degree, investigating the practice of decision making within school structures and how it is developed and enhanced. The questions will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. This questionnaire is anonymous and at no stage will your identity be revealed. I appreciate you participation and support in completing this questionnaire and take this opportunity to thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

---

1. Do you view yourself as a:

   - leader ☐

   - follower ☐

   - leader and follower ☐

1.1 Provide reasons for your above choice :

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. In your opinion what is the dominant leadership style of your Principal?

   - authoritarian ☐

   - participatory ☐

   - laissez faire ☐

   - other ☐

2.1 Provide reasons for your above response

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. In your opinion what is the leadership style of your Head of Department?

- authoritarian ☐

- participatory ☐

- laissez faire ☐

3.1 Provide reasons for your above response

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. How are decisions taken at Staff Meetings? ☐

- Decisions are taken after a discussion and consensus reached

- Principal's decisions is final ☐

- No decision-making takes place ☐

5. How are decisions taken at Phase Meetings?

- Decisions are taken after a discussion and consensus reached ☐

- HOD's decisions is final ☐

- No decision-making takes place ☐

6. How are decisions reached at other committee meetings?

_____
_____
_____

7. Decisions regarding curriculum related matters are ☐

- decided by the Head of Department

- discussed with teachers, but the final decision is taken by the HOD

  ☐

- discussed and a decision is jointly taken ☐

8. What are some of the school structures/committees that you belong to and what role do you play within these structures?

_____
_____
_____

9. When you lead and make decisions, do you

- take the initiative

- wait to be delegated the duty by the SMT

- not take a leading role in decision-making

10. Does the SMT provide you with opportunities to lead and make decisions?

- yes

- No

10.1 If yes, cite some examples.

_____
_____
_____

11. Do you think that the government's move towards decentralisation and greater participation is adequately being filtered down at school level?

- Yes

- No

11.1 Explain your above response.

_____
_____
_____

12. Do you feel that you are sufficiently empowered to take a leading role in decision making?

- Yes

- No

12.1 Explain your above response.

_____
_____
_____

13. How do your colleagues feel about you taking a lead in decision making?

_____
_____

14. Does the school context/ethos encourage or discourage you from taking a lead in decision making. Explain

_____
_____
_____

15. What in your opinion or in your practice of decision-making are some of the challenges encountered?

_____
_____
_____
_____

16. What factors do you think are necessary for decision-making to be more distributed?

_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your time and effort in providing invaluable data. Your input and effort is much appreciated   Many Thanks,   Ronnie Moodley

APPENDIX J – OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

DATE OF OBSERVATION: _____ TIME**:** _____

SITUATION/CONTEXT WHERE EDUCATORS DISPLAY LEADSERSHIP INIATIVE AND DECISISIONS ARE TAKEN:

_____
_____
_____

PARTICIPANTS:

_____

WHO IS THE INITIATOR?

Principal	☐
Deputy Principal	☐
Head of Departments	☐
Senior Teachers	☐
Level 1 educators	☐

WHO DOMINATES THE DISCUSSION?

Principal	☐
Deputy Principal	☐
Head of Departments	☐
Senior Teachers	☐
Level 1 educators	☐

EDUCATORS ATTITUDE TO THEIR PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING: **(indicate the educator)**

Lack of commitment	☐
Resistance/ barrier	☐
Lack of confidence	☐
Full participation	☐
Encouraging	☐

THE ATTITUDE OF EDUCATORS TOWARDS THOSE THAT SHOW LEADERSHIP INIATIVE AND CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE MAKING OF A DECISION.

Encouraging ☐

Dismissive ☐

Resistance ☐

THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF THE SMT: (indicate SMT member)

Autocratic ☐

Democratic ☐

Distributive ☐

Transactional ☐

Transformational ☐

Other (indicate) ☐

THE SMT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SHARED DECISION MAKING:

Supportive ☐

Discourages ☐

Context driven ☐

THE OPPORTUNITIES MADE AVAILABLE TO EDUCATORS TO TAKE LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES AND SHARE IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS.

_____
_____

IS DECISION MAKING MORE

Authorised ☐

Emergent ☐

Dispersed ☐

Democratic ☐

TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS IS MORE

☐

Restricted

Emergent ☐

Successful ☐

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN THE MAKING OF DECISIONS. (Indicate who experiences the challenge/s)

Opinions/suggestions are dismissed ☐

Opinions/suggestions are resisted ☐

Principal's attitude (accountability) ☐

Hierarchical structure of school ☐

Lack of trust by principal/SMT ☐

Lack of confidence by level 1 educator ☐

Lack of skills ☐

Time constraints ☐

Workload ☐

Lack of initiative to participation ☐

DID THE FINAL DECISION TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE VIEWS EXPRESSED DURING THE DISCUSSION

Yes ☐

No ☐

Partially ☐

WHO MAKES THE FINAL DECISION?

Principal ☐

SMT ☐

Educator ☐

Consensus ☐

APPENDIX K: DoE – APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

RONNIE V. MOODLEY
PO BOX 727
LUXMI
3201

Enquiries:	Sibusiso Alwar
Date:	20/09/2010
Reference:	0087/2010

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to interview Departmental Officials, learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. **You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.**
2. **Educators' programmes are not interrupted.**
3. **Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.**
4. **Learners, educators and schools are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.**
5. **Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.**
6. **A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.**
7. **A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools where the intended interviews are to be conducted.**

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research: **Decision making as an activity of school leadership: A case study.**

It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes

R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)
Superintendent-General

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

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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

PHYSICAL: Office G25; 188 Pietermaritz Street; Metropolitan Building; PIETERMARITZBURG 3201

TEL: Tel:+27 33 341 8610/8611 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | E-mail

APPENDIX L: ETHICAL APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Research Office
Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
University Road
Chiltern Hills
Westville
3629
South Africa
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Fax No: +27 31 260 2384
E-mail : naidoos4@ukzn.ac.za

22 November 2010

Mr R V Moodley
School of Education and Development
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS

Dear Mr Moodley

PROTOCOL: Decision Making as an activity of School Leadership: A Case Study
ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/1330/2010 M: Faculty of Education

In response to your application dated 10 November 2010, Student Number: **207526557** the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL.**

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

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

Yours faithfully

Professor Steve Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

SC/sn

cc: Dr I mudvidziwa (Supervisor)
cc: Mr N Memela